

LONDON THE READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

No. 936.—VOL. XXXVI.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING APRIL 9, 1881.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[FOUND AGAIN.]

A WINSOME WIFE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"From Her Own Lips," &c., &c.

CHAPTER X.

A BLACK HEART.

What mighty ills have not been done by woman?
Who was't betrayed the Capitol? a woman!
Who lost Mark Antony the world? a woman!
Who was the cause of a long ten years' war,
And laid at last old Troy in ashes? woman!
Destructive, damnable, deceitful woman!

"A lady to see you, my lord."

"What lady?" and Arthur Petronel looked up from a reverie wherein he had forgotten that he was Earl of Toronto and master of the broad acres around the old house.

He was back in Scotland, listening to the sweet voice of Stella Catalani, as she sang in despair and misery to the rough men on the building ground.

He had told his aunt of his mad love with a purpose, for he had resolved at once to begin a search for Stella which should only end in his finding her dead or alive. If she were alive she should be his wife, let the world say what it would, and let all his kindred lift up their hands in horror. A Petronel could marry as he liked. There had been Earls of Toronto who had married low-born wives; and as he thought a slight shiver passed over him as he recalled how one of his ancestors, not so very many genera-

tions back, had been the dupe of a wicked woman whose beauty had bewitched him, and how murder and misery unutterable had come of the marriage.

But the recollection of Stella and the witching purity and innocence of her lovely face dispelled all thoughts like these, and every moment that he thought of her the more beautiful he pictured her to himself. He had thought of her in all ways since that well-remembered day; he had pictured her in the Toronto diamonds—gems of price and hardly to be matched for brilliance anywhere—and in the simple costume of every-day life, and each image of her that he called up to his mind seemed more lovely than the last.

It was a madness—the worst that can seize a man—the madness of a love that springs into life with giant strength and decks the object of it with all the attributes of beauty and virtue. On this reverie the voice of the servant broke, dispelling the day dream.

"The lady gave no name, my lord. She said she wanted to see you on business."

The earl was very accessible when he was at liberty, as he was to-day. He did not fence himself round with an impenetrable barrier of dignity and coldness, and he was immensely popular in consequence. Lady Beckenham said he made himself too cheap, and was very often wrath with him for seeing people that she declared Barling could have dealt with quite as well. But her ladyship was out this morning. She had told him shortly over the breakfast table that nothing would take the taste of his communication to her out of her mouth but plenty of fresh air, and she had taken Carita with her on a round of duty calls.

He was at liberty to see the lady if he pleased without the possibility of any remark being made. He doubted her being a lady in the real sense of the word. He expected to see the wife of one of his tenants come to prefer some petition or other. Men had a knack of sending their wives when they wanted anything, knowing how good the young earl always was to the women-kind.

"Oh, show her up," Lord Toronto said; "but you might give her a hint that I am busy at the same time, Andrews. I can't spare her quite all the morning, whoever she is."

"Very good, my lord."

Andrews was discreet, and his lordship and his master knew that he would do exactly as he was told, and he drew a book in front of him on the table that he might not seem to be idle when his visitor appeared, and waited for her, prepared to hear some story of repairs wanted, or some plea for a little longer respite in the matter of rent, or some of the usual requests that his people preferred to him.

"Mrs. Stapleton, my lord."

He did not catch the name, but he rose courteously as the lady walked into the room, and beheld Stella Catalani! not the wan, thinly clad girl of the streets, not the singer lifting her fresh, young voice for bread, but a woman such as he had but now been picturing to himself—a refined, graceful lady; dressed with exquisite taste, albeit her costume was of the simplest kind, an angel clad in soft muslin and dainty lace.

For one brief moment he stared at her helplessly as if he were in a dream. In the next he had caught her to his heart and was holding her in a passionate embrace.

"Found, found," he murmured, "at last! Thank Heaven! My heart will be at rest now."

And before she could free herself he had pressed a kiss upon her lips, hardly knowing what he did in the sudden joy of meeting her again. She struggled to free herself now, and he saw that she was very pale.

"Oh! forgive me, forgive me," he said, hoarsely. "You don't know—how should you?—how I have longed for this meeting—how I have sought you, wearying for a sight of your face, a sound of your voice!"

"You do me honour, my lord."

The voice was as sweet as the lovely face seemed pure, and its soft tones sent a thrill through him as he looked at her and wondered what happy chance had sent her there to him.

"Honour!" he said. "Nay, it is you who would honour any man, any home, but you are come now, and Petronel will have its mistress, and I—"

He broke down, utterly overcome by the many mingled feelings that the sight of her had called up. His aunt had called him mad, and verily he was a madman in that moment. His visitor evidently thought so too, for she made a movement as if she would go.

"I think you must be mistaking me for someone else, my lord," she said, quietly. "I came to thank you for the help you once gave me. I have had no opportunity before. I only discovered yesterday that the Arthur Petronel who saved me from such bitter misery on that dreadful night and the Earl of Toronto were one and the same. I could not help coming to say how truly grateful I am and have been ever since for your help—you were gone the next day."

"Yes, I had to come home or you would have seen me. Your image has been with me ever since. It has come between me and everything that I have done. Ah! why was there not some intuition to tell you my heart longed for you? How I would have laid everything I possessed at your feet! It is waiting to be laid there still."

"I hardly understand you, Lord Toronto," she said, in her low, gentle voice, though in truth she understood him perfectly, and her heart was full of bitterness as she listened. "Do you mean me to understand that you would have made me your countess, a girl whom you had heard singing in the streets?"

"My queen if I had been a king," he said, with wild excitement. There seemed to be witchery in her very presence for him. "My queen, and I would ask nothing better than to be the very humblest of your subjects."

"Your lordship is very kind, but I must not listen to such words from you. It is all too late."

"Too late?"

"Even so."

"How?"

"I am married."

"Married?"

"Yes."

She was almost frightened at the grey, cold look that came into his face at her words, and her heart was beating with frightful rapidity, with more emotions than she would like anyone to have suspected, but she spoke calmly enough as she went on.

"I am the wife of a good man, Lord Toronto, who came to my relief when my mother lay dead in our miserable lodging, and I had not means, save for the help you had given me, to give her decent burial. You and I must meet no more from this time."

"No, of course," and the earl's voice sounded hollow and broken as he spoke. "It was a dream, and it is past, that is all. You must forgive me if you can for my vehemence."

"Kindness does not want forgiveness," she replied, gently. "I shall be grateful to you all my life. It was the turning point with me, but we must 'shake hands and part,' as Hamlet says, my lord."

"Yes, yes, we must. I could not be near

you and not love you. And your husband? Will you not tell me who he is? They call you Mrs. —"

"They call me Mrs. Stapleton," was the quiet answer. "Can I trust you with a secret, Lord Toronto?"

"With anything. With your life, if need be."

"I am sure I could," and the serpent eyes, as Lady Carita had called them, looked straight into Arthur Petronel's as no woman's eyes should look into the face of a man not her husband, and he grew giddy under the fascination of her presence. "I am not Mrs. Stapleton. My marriage is a secret for the present. Not because my husband is ashamed of me," she added, with a smile, "but because of a clause in some will or other in which he is to have money some time if he keeps single. He says that it is for my sake that he is keeping the secret. I don't like it at all."

"I have heard of some such will," said the earl, a light flashing into his mind. "Are you the wife of Noel Treherne?"

"Yes. You will not betray me?"

"You have my word. I am glad to know you have so good a man—for all I hear of him is good—for your husband. We must part, but I shall be able to think of you in affluence if not splendour. I shall leave Petronel."

"You will not go away—for—for—me?" she asked, the words dropping slowly from her lips as she began to realise the might of his passion for her.

"I will, I must. I cannot stay here where I may see you every day. I could not; I should go mad; I should forget my manhood and your peace, and remember nothing but my great love."

"But we will go away—Mrs. Mansfield and I. She is not my aunt, though they call her so. She is Noel's cousin, and my watch-dog. She and I will go somewhere else."

"No; you will not. What would your husband, who has placed you there, say to your sudden removal? I will go and pray Heaven to teach me to forget."

She was so bewildered by all that had happened, and his sudden avowal, that she hardly knew what she said or did, or how she got out of the house, and she was glad to get away into the woods round the park and think over what had happened.

"And I might have been Countess of Toronto," she said to herself, with exceeding bitterness, as she sat down to rest on a fallen tree. "Countess of Toronto, and mistress of all these broad acres. Is he mad, I wonder? I almost thought he was as he sat there talking to me. There was method in his madness too. What a chance to have missed! Countess of Toronto! And I should have graced the coronet as well as any of the women whose portraits hang on the walls yonder. And I should have ruled too. I could turn him round my finger. He is a man who would be as weak as water where a woman was concerned. My lady! The countess! And I am plain Mrs. Treherne, and not daring to own even that much. It's a crooked world, full of lost chances, and what I thought my great good luck has lost me one of the best of them."

When Lady Beckenham and her niece returned from their round of calls they found the earl hastily preparing for a journey, and were told he was going to town at once. It was urgent business, he told them. Something was wanted at his lawyer's without delay, and nothing but his presence would serve.

They could not discover that any message had come for him during their absence, and he declined to enter into any explanations. He looked stern and white, and they concluded that some large sum of money or piece of property was at stake to account for his sudden flight. His aunt must do the honours of the house, he told her, if he were detained in town, and make the best of things to the guests who were coming. He did not know how long he should be away.

CHAPTER XI.

COMING EVENTS CAST THEIR SHADOWS BEFORE.

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death.

No one could fathom the reason of the earl's sudden departure, nor understand the cause of the white, set face that he showed his frightened aunt and sister when they returned from their outing and found him in all the bustle of preparation.

"You must be content, Carita," he said, sadly, when his sister would have pressed about him and begged for some explanation of what had happened. "I must go. If I could tell you why, child, you would say so too, but I cannot—I cannot."

"But, Arthur dear, if you are in any trouble—"

"I am in trouble—the heaviest that can befall any man. Don't look so frightened, dear, it only concerns me. Petronel and its revenues are in no danger, and I have done nothing to jeopardise them; and auntie must take my place here, and—"

"Can't Mr. Warburton help you?"

"No one can help me. I shall write to Warburton, and if I do not come back—"

"If you do not come back? What do you mean, Arthur? Surely this trouble, whatever it is, will not make an exile of you for ever? Oh! why do you leave me in the dark like this?"

"I have no right to frighten you, my little sister, and I don't want to. I am not going to stay away from Petronel forever, don't imagine that for a moment, and I am going to be its very good master if I can all the time I am away. Circumstances make my absence a matter of necessity for the present, and circumstances may bring me back again in a very little while."

He could not tell her that the only thing to bring him back would be the departure of the fair-haired enchantress at the Nest. It was not for his sister to know that he, Arthur Petronel, was in love with another man's wife, and that he could put no control on his passion except by running away like a coward from the danger he dared not face.

It was true. He was a very coward in his madness, and was taking the only course that his malady left open to him—getting away from the chance of further mischief.

"I do not tell Aunt Hagar quite everything," he said to Carita, "help her to think that I am going to town, there's a good girl; there will be time enough to tell her more when I decide what I am going to do afterwards. If any chance should bring Warburton here, and it may, you will welcome him cordially, will you not? He will be some help to you in entertaining the people."

"Oh, Arthur, must they come?"

"Yes, dear, one could hardly write and cancel the invitations now. You and Aunt Hagar will do very well; she has done the honours of Petronel for my father many a time, and she will do them for me. Don't look so sad about it, little one. I may come back directly almost."

But he knew while he was speaking that he should never set foot at Petronel again till Noel Treherne's wife was far away, and when that would be there was no knowing.

Lady Beckenham was very angry indeed with her nephew, and gave him what she called a piece of her mind, but all to no purpose. She would hardly say good bye to him when he drove away, and made a business of writing to the London lawyers who managed his affairs to find out if possible the reason of his strange conduct.

They knew nothing and could tell nothing. The earl had given them no instructions, and they did not know of any business that could take him away just then. He was in no money difficulty that they were aware of.

Mrs. Stapleton could have told her all about it when she called, as she soon did, at the

Nest, to be fascinated with Mrs. Mansfield's grace and good breeding, and to entertain pretty much the same opinion as her niece of the younger inmate of that pretty retreat.

The golden-haired beauty listened with something of a bored air to what was being said, and then turned suddenly to Lady Beckenham with a query.

"Is Lord Toronto quite in his right mind?" she asked.

"Of course," was the surprised answer. "Why?"

"I beg your pardon if I have said anything I shouldn't," Mrs. Stapleton said, hurriedly, "but you were telling Aunt Mansfield that he had suddenly gone away without giving any reason just when he had invited a house full of company; it seemed so very odd, that was all."

"It is odd, my dear, but there is nothing wrong with my nephew's mind, the Petronels do not go mad. We are anxious lest there is any trouble of which we do not know, that is all."

"What a curious man Lord Toronto must be," Mrs. Stapleton said to her aunt, after her ladyship had departed. "If I were Lady Beckenham I should take it for granted that he had gone after the singing woman he heard him telling her about the other night."

"I am sorry for him if it is so."

"Why?"

"Because he is just the man, I should imagine, to search for the woman till he finds her."

"And then?"

"Marry her and repent it ever afterwards."

"He may find her some day, who knows?" Mrs. Stapleton said.

And then seeming tired of the subject she let it drop.

No one knew of her expedition to Petronel except the servant who had admitted her. Mrs. Mansfield had been very unwell that morning, the result she declared of sitting on the damp grass the night before, and she had remained in her room.

Her charge was in the habit of wandering about the grounds of the Nest, which were pretty though not extensive, and into the park sometimes, and she was glad to be rid of her for a little while, for the young lady did not take the trouble to make herself agreeable, and being her constant companion was very fatiguing work sometimes.

She had gone out for her usual stroll, and no one had taken any notice of her or the fact that she was something more carefully dressed than was always the case.

She was coquettish and fond of dress to a degree, and spent many hours before her looking-glass would have sufficed to make all the dresses and finery she wore.

She had seemed a strong-minded girl enough when her mother was dying and she had to find a way to put bread in her mouth. It may be that the fact of her marvellous beauty and what she could do with it had not dawned upon her as it did afterwards. Now she was a wife and removed from the possibility of want all she seemed to think about was how she could adorn herself and lift herself out of the obscurity her husband deemed necessary for the sake of their mutual secret.

He had found out the mistake he had made almost before their honeymoon was over. He had done a generous and manly action in taking the forlorn girl under his wing, and he mistook, as many men do, gratitude for love, and thought she would be to him the true and loving wife she had vowed at the altar to be to her life's end.

True to him she certainly had been. He had nothing to reproach her with on the score of fidelity. She had been admired and flattered enough in their sojourn abroad to turn any feminine head, but she had only laughed at all the fine things said to her, and declared herself content with her lot.

As long as they were on the Continent all went smoothly enough—there were change and variety and life, and she was not dull.

It was a different thing now she had to come back to England and lived shut up, as she called it, with a frumpy old woman. And now on the

top of all had come the astounding revelation that but for the merest accident she might have been Countess of Toronto, and the knowledge fairly turned her head.

If she was restless and discontented before she was bitterly sour now, and reproached herself and her absent and indulgent husband with a fierce temper that was almost demoniac.

"I was a fool!" she said to herself, in the solitude of her park, where she was rambling under the trees and looking at Petronel with envious eyes. "An idiotic fool! Why did I not wait? I might have known that with my face I could have won any man. And now I am tied for life, and I might have been there, THERE!—mistress of that house and all this."

She stretched her arms around the prospect and then sat down under a fine old oak that had stood there since the domain was first enclosed and had witnessed Heaven knows what of human joys and sorrows, and wept as if her heart would break for the splendour that might have been hers.

"I beg your pardon. Is there anything the matter?"

A man's voice roused her and she looked up to see a familiar face and form, though for the moment she could not remember where she had seen them before.

"Nothing, thank you," starting up. "That is, nothing that anyone can help me in. I—"

She stopped suddenly, for the gentleman, a handsome man of about eight and twenty or thirty, was staring at her in blank amazement.

"You!" he gasped, "here!"

"I don't know you," she said, recollection beginning to dawn on her, "that is I do not know your name. I saw you once."

"Yes, I was in Ayr that evening. I see you remember me now. But how did you come here? Did he send for you?"

He was angry with himself the moment he had uttered the words. He knew it was not so, and yet it was the only solution of her presence in the park at Petronel that he could think of. He had not heard from Arthur the reason of his sudden departure. He had received a hurried note from him saying he was leaving home for a little while, and asking him to be at the service of the womenkind if he could while he was away. He had hurried from town to find out what was the matter if possible, and that he had stumbled on the solution of it he did not doubt the moment he saw the face of Stella Catalani.

"If you mean your friend, Lord Toronto," was the quiet answer, "he certainly has not. My husband and myself are tenants of his, that is all."

"Your husband! I beg your pardon. I was not aware—"

"That I was married. I suppose not. Our acquaintance was of the slightest if you remember."

She laughed slightly and a little scornfully, as it seemed. She knew she would find an enemy to her future plans if she made any in this man with the clear, honest eyes, and she hated him in her heart already, as women will hate those who are purer in motive than themselves.

"Our acquaintance was certainly only a matter of a few minutes, Mrs. a—"

"Mrs. Stapleton, if you please. I live at the Nest."

"And does the earl know you are here?"

"Certainly. He made the discovery the very day he left Petronel, I believe."

She spoke calmly, almost with a sneer, and she looked him straight in the face with her serpent eyes, as Lady Carita had called them, and he knew from that moment what manner of woman he should have to deal with if ever any ill befell his friend through her.

He had almost a superstitious fancy that evil would come of that curious meeting of nearly a year ago now, and he had wished so earnestly that Arthur Petronel and the woman who had fascinated him so strangely might never meet. They had met, evidently, and mischief had already begun.

"You have seen Lord Toronto then?"

"Certainly. I called upon him to thank him for that service he rendered me. I could hardly do less. I will wish you a good morning, Mr.—"

"My name is Warburton—Leonard Warburton."

She bowed, and gathering up her dress, swept by him with the air of a duchess.

"Poor Arthur," he said, as she passed him on her way to the Nest. "He has seen her, and the glamour is on him still. And God help her husband, whoever he is; there's trouble in store for him, or I am very much mistaken!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE HAND OF FATE.

Men must endure
Their going hence, even as their coming hither—
Ripeness is all.

It was a "pleasure tinged with pain" that Leonard Warburton felt in being so near the woman he loved so dearly, and whose heart in all its young freshness was given to another. Pointed with a very sharp pain indeed when she turned to him as she constantly did for advice and assistance. He was Arthur's friend, and she was glad to have him about the house, helping and supporting her aunt and herself as he did in every way.

No thought of any warmer feeling for him than sisterly interest ever entered her head. How should it when Noel Treherne had stolen away her heart in the dangerous days when he had been her aunt's privileged guest in London. She was ashamed and angry with herself when she thought of that time. She had fancied, as many girls do, that the love would be created "to reward the love," as Browning has it, and had no idea that the grave and somewhat silent man had looked upon her as some "bright particular star," as far removed from his sphere as the stars from the lower world.

It was all over now. He was married and she must crush out the love that had been so sweet and yet so painful because of its secrecy, and think no more of him. The cure was working itself unknown to her. Nothing could ever make her forget him, she told herself, whenever she permitted herself to think about him at all. And yet she was beginning to think about him with calmness, and to take an interest in her life in a fashion that showed pretty plainly that the wound was healing.

She deemed him happy in his marriage, and pictured him to herself as going about with his bride playing the lover as she would fain have had him play it to her. Had she known the truth her love would have remained in its full force, for it would have been mixed with the pity that is so nearly allied to it.

Petronel was full of guests. Lady Beckenham was an admirable hostess, and Leonard Warburton at her request made a long stay to help to entertain such of the invited gentlemen as chose to remain in the host's absence. They were not many, and those privileged friends; but despite the anxiety of the two ladies regarding the earl's movements the party managed to be very lively and to get a good deal of enjoyment out of the bright weather and the many fascinations of country life in August.

The ladies from the Nest were invited more than once to join in the amusements which were got up, and everyone voted Mrs. Stapleton one of the loveliest of women, and her aunt a perfect lady.

Leonard Warburton said nothing of what he knew, and Stella mentally thanked him for his reticence, though in her heart she felt afraid of him.

"If he can work me a mischief he will," she said to herself, as she watched his face and saw no friendship in it towards her. "He looks like a man who could read anyone like a book. He shall not read me if I can help it. I will go my way in spite of him."

He was always courteous to her, though she felt sure that if he had had his way she would

have no invitations to Petronel, and she laughed to herself to think how necessary she was making herself to Lady Carita and her aunt for the amusement of their guests.

A spell of wet weather set in soon after the arrival of Mr. Warburton, and the young folks and the elder ones too, had to fall back on indoor amusements to while away the time. It was then that they found out that Mrs. Stapleton could sing like a syren and dance like a fairy—to say nothing of a wonderful talent for getting up and acting charades and drawing-room pieces; she was so amiable too.

Mrs. Mansfield signed and shrugged her shoulders when she heard someone say so, and thought to herself that the speaker had only seen the young lady's company manners; and her beauty was undeniable—the country folks had not seen anything like it, and were ready to think her an angel in mortal guise.

She was keenly inquisitive about Petronel and its masters past and present, and Carita, who was really grateful to her for all her efforts in the cause of amusement, and rather repentant for having thought so badly of her when she did not know her, answered her questions in full, and was rather flattered at her interest.

Leonard Warburton chafed at the foothold she seemed to be establishing, though he could find no valid reason for cautioning Lady Carita and her aunt against her. She was a married woman, and her husband was Lord Toronto's tenant.

Her aunt was a lady, there was no doubt of the fact, and the lawyers who had let them the house had made all possible inquiries about them before they entered into possession of the Nest. They knew the husband's name, though the house was taken in the name of Mrs. Mansfield.

It was impossible for anyone to complain of the little lady, and yet Mr. Warburton felt uncomfortable; he scarcely knew why.

"I wish something would put a stop to her coming here," he said one day to Lady Beckenham.

"So do I," was the lady's ready answer. "She's a cat, Mr. Warburton."

"I don't think she's a good woman," he said, smiling at the simile. "There's a motive in her life, and whatever it is I think she'll carry it out. I would rather she would do it at a distance from your niece."

"Carita could not bear her at first. She has managed to do away with a great deal of her prejudice. I must say she has made herself very useful to us in this dismal weather."

"For her own ends. I wish something would take her away from the Nest."

Mr. Warburton's stay was getting short now. He was not altogether his own master, and must be on the wing. He had been of great service, for he had managed to shorten the stay of many of the visitors and to put off others, so that the ladies were not overburdened, and above all he had contrived to put a plausible appearance on the continued absence of Arthur Petronel from home. He was on the Continent, and was understood to be looking after some property which had come to him through the death of a relative, and was supposed to be enjoying himself after the fashion of young men and preferring the delights of Paris and Vienna to the country pleasures at home.

Lady Carita and her aunt were going on a visit or two, and the inmates of the Nest would be left once more to their solitude and enjoyment of one another's society. Not quite so desolate as before, for the acquaintance they had made with the family at the house would ensure them attentions from the servants and housekeeper, and Lady Carita had given orders that Mrs. Stapleton should be free of the library and picture gallery whenever she chose to visit them.

She visited them very often. She liked to dream away her time in the grand old rooms, and to fancy what might have been if she had not accepted the hand of Noel Treherne. Such thoughts made her unsympathetic and disagreeable at home, and she could not see in her

selfishness what was patent to everyone else that her friend and chaperon was very ill.

Whether it was cold or any complaint caught in going about the neighbourhood did not appear, and the doctor talked about want of tone and constitutional weakness, and did his best. But for some time before the breaking up of the party at Petronel Leonard Warburton had his misgivings about the gentle, motherly woman who seemed bowed down by some secret care, and earnestly recommended her not to stay at the Nest alone with Stella any longer.

Mrs. Mansfield had fallen into a quiet intimacy with him. He made himself agreeable to her, and did her many little services for which she was very grateful. It cannot be denied that he had a motive for his attentions besides the attraction of her presence. He wanted, in his friend's interest, to find out all he could about Stella, and who her husband was.

"May I say something to you?" he asked her one day, when she seemed more than usually ill, and his time for going away was drawing very near.

"Anything," she said, wearily. "What is it?"

"Only a suggestion that your young friend would be better under her husband's care. I have a painful reason for speaking as I do, or I would not venture—"

"Oh, don't apologise. It is the very thing I wish most earnestly for; I would give the world to be free of my charge. I fear her; I cannot tell why, but she seems to oppress me somehow, and I live in daily dread of some horrible catastrophe."

And the excited lady, weak through illness and worry, broke down, and cried as if her heart were breaking. He did not seek to soothe her, believing what was really the truth, that the tears were an outcome of long-repressed excitement, and that they would do her good. She had had no one about her but servants and the object of her fear ever since she had been at the Nest, and the relief of speaking to someone else was great.

"I am very foolish," she said, when she had recovered herself a little, "but I get so tired and worn sometimes, and now that I am not well—"

"It was the best thing that could have happened to you," Leonard Warburton said, cheerily. "My poor mother used to say that tears were a great safety valve to the feelings, and yours were strung up to the highest pitch, I think."

"Yes, yes, they were. But about that unhappy girl—for she is an unhappy girl, Mr. Warburton. What has she been doing? Don't keep anything from me."

"Doing!" and the young man looked at her with rather a puzzled face. "Nothing. I have not heard a breath against her. But she and I have met before, and—"

"You know her, then?"

"Scarcely. I have seen her once before I came here, that is all."

Mrs. Mansfield looked disappointed, but she said, eagerly:

"Tell me all you know about her. I know so little, but I feel I know she is not a good woman."

"You do not know her?" Mr. Warburton said, in surprise. "I thought you were her aunt."

"No; that is what she calls me. I am her husband's cousin. He begged me to take charge of her here and I could not refuse. He is the best friend I have in the world, and I love him dearly. The more so that I know, though he does not say so, that the marriage is not a happy one."

"Not happy?"

"No; he is cruelly disappointed. I can see it every time he comes near us. It was some romantic love match I believe, and he thought, poor fellow, that he could win her heart by his goodness. I fancy from something I once heard him say that she has great reason to be grateful to him. He did not say it as any reproach, but it was led to in the course of our conversation, and he turned the subject directly. She is anything but that—she is discontented, vain, and frivolous,

and I think poor Noel bitterly repents of his choice."

"Noel! Is that Mr. Stapleton's name?"

"His first name, yes."

Mrs. Mansfield spoke with evident confusion, as if she had made a blunder in mentioning it, and her visitor felt a sudden intuition that this discontented wife was no other than the woman he had heard of as having been married to Noel Treherne.

If so where and when had he met the golden-haired singer? It was all a mystery and a puzzle, and he could not disentangle the web at all. He answered Mrs. Mansfield promptly enough.

"I don't know whether I should do right in saying where I saw the lady," he said; "she might object. It was under very painful circumstances for her, though I believe she was driven to do what she did by sheer necessity."

She pressed for an answer, and after a few moments' deliberation he told her all he knew, and, more than that, he confided in her about Arthur Petronel's infatuation. He thought it might put her on her guard. She looked at him with frightened eyes and a pale face.

"You were quite right to tell me this," she said; "it may prevent further mischief."

"I hope there is none to prevent," he said.

"My friend is away, and the young lady herself told me that she was a married woman. She is doubtless unaware of the feelings Lord Toronto entertains for her."

"Oh, no, she is not. She knows all about it, Mr. Warburton. I can understand her now. I will take your advice thankfully—the sooner I can get her husband here the better."

(To be Continued.)

SCIENCE.

CRYSTALLINE sulphur, recently formed, has been found under portions of the city of Paris in excavating on the site of the old moat which was filled up with refuse material about two hundred years ago.

PHOTOGRAPHING LIGHTNING.—A very distinct photograph of a lightning flash was taken by Mr. Crowe, of Liverpool, during the severe thunderstorm which visited that city on July 17, 1880. The flash, which has been made to photograph itself by its own light, appeared over St. Philemon's Church at the instant the bell-tower was shattered to pieces. It exactly resembles the zig-zag spark of an induction coil, and is estimated to have been about 51 inches broad.

COMMERCIAL bismuth is usually sensitive to light, and undergoes some alteration by exposure to its action. Herr Schneider, of Berlin, has found that this property is probably due to a slight admixture of silver with ordinary bismuth, for when the silver is absent no change occurs. In the Harz Mountains of Germany bismuth commonly occurs associated with ores of silver.

A PASTE of calcined magnesia and water has been employed in France with wonderful success in treating burns caused by boiling sulphuric acid. The mask formed of this paste must be removed and renewed as fast as fissures appear in it. Two cases of terrible burns in the face, occasioned by an explosion in a chemical lecture-room, have lately been so thoroughly cured by this method of treatment that no trace of the injuries remained visible.

AIR CUSHIONS.—The Japanese employ paper instead of india-rubber for making air-cushions, and it is said to form a more convenient article. Paper cushions roll up smaller than india-rubber ones, they do not stick together after being wetted, and having no odour they are more agreeable for pillows than those of caoutchouc fabric. Moreover, their strength is absolutely marvellous, considering the apparent frailty of the material out of which they are made; a man weighing 160 lbs. may stand on one without bursting it. They are said to be waterproof too, and to make good life-preservers.



[A WOMAN OF THE WORLD.]

A BURIED SIN; OR, HAUNTED LIVES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Kate Branksome's Foe," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN UNEXPECTED QUESTION.

I think of thee! My thoughts do twine and bud
About thee as wild vines about a tree.

THERE is no cry, whether heard in the busy day or in the silent night-watches, more potent to impel to common unselfish action the people it does not actually threaten than that of "Fire!" Nor is there one which so isolates the atoms of humanity, developing in a single instant cruel Ishmaelitic egotism, than that same cry, when it implies that men are shut up with a relentless demon, ready to clutch at them with flaming hands and eager to devour.

Freston schoolroom would doubtless have been the scene of one of those senseless, homicidal panics which occur periodically in church or theatre but for one man's presence of mind. Already at the door people begin to push and struggle to escape; already, amid the Babel of tongues, foolish women begin to scream, when St. John Darrell, with a stern "Silence, fool!"—which effectually checks the shouts wherewith Lord Ferrars is adding to the confusion—sets himself to repair the mischief of that young scapegrace's practical joke.

"Go to the piano, Blanche, and pound away at it as hard as you possibly can," he commands, quietly.

The girl has risen from her seat in momentarily increasing alarm, but she obeys him unhesitatingly, unquestioningly, ascending the steps of

the platform without so much as a backward glance.

She is glad to remember this afterwards, glad that in such an emergency he appealed first to her, and was not disappointed; glad that his tone had the old kindness, and that for the first time he called her Blanche.

It is only from the latter circumstance, she infers afterwards, that he appreciated the peril of the crisis, for she remembers his clear tones did not lose their normal languid calm—that his dark face was scornfully reposeful as ever—that he bowed slightly as he drew aside with the unhurried, courtly grace habitual to his movements, to give her precedence. And she marvels afterwards that these trifles should so photograph themselves upon her memory.

There is but a step from the sublime to the ridiculous. It is broad farce no doubt when St. John Darrell, snatching the violin from the earl's unresisting hands, draws the bow smartly across the strings and tries to make notes (which have neither time nor tune, but only an ear-splitting shrillness) audible above the noise of the piano. But on this occasion broad farce is within a hair's breadth of solemn tragedy. Assuredly the delay of a few seconds and bones would be broken in the narrow doorway; someone would be beaten down and trampled to death by cowardly, reckless feet.

As it is the consternation of the people in the front rows changes to amusement; and those behind, hearing so extraordinary a musical duet, partly forget their fear, and the mad rush is effectually stopped. Then St. John Darrell checks the performance of his fair ally, and speaks a few reassuring words which render his efforts complete.

"There is no occasion for alarm. Somebody has played a practical joke upon us, the principal ingredients in which appear to be gunpowder and cayenne pepper. The result, considered from an olfactory standpoint, is hardly satisfactory. But there is no danger. Mr. Pendexter will probably suggest an adjournment of his concert."

Whereupon the Rev. Felix rises, and declaims furiously against the unknown buffoon who has played this trick; declamation which is somewhat weakened by continual sneezings. In expeditious but orderly fashion the audience file out, and break into knots to discuss the occurrence.

"The carriages were ordered for ten," says the earl. "It will take at least half an hour to fetch them from the castle. Miss Blanche, do you feel equal to a walk home with me, or will you await their arrival?"

"I should prefer the walk."
"Et moi aussi," cries Lady Dunraven, gaily, turning to St. John Darrell. "Knight of the Sombre Countenance, may a hapless fair, just escaped from grievous spells of some wicked enchanter (whose name methinks she can guess), crave protection and guidance through an enchanted wood?"

"Mrs. Trollope and I will wait at the rectory until a carriage arrives," says Mrs. Carew.

"And Clare will walk with me, eh, sis?" says Ferrars.

So the pairing is satisfactorily arranged, and the earl marches off with Blanche Carew rather precipitately, a circumstance which is noted and whisperingly commented upon by the dowager of gossiping propensities to whom Lady Dunraven bestowed earlier in the evening confidences which so affected Darrell that the sobriquet of "Knight of the Sombre Countenance" is not inaptly given.

It is one of those balmy evenings of late summer or early autumn, which you will, that seem expressly fitted for leisurely rambling out of doors, one of those nights when the soft gloom, the breath of light zephyr-kisses, and the companionship of any woman under forty, suffice to create some vague stirring of poetry and romance in the breast of the most practical of male materialists.

My lord of Malbreckthane is not a sentimental person, but as he saunters with Blanche Carew through copse and meadow he begins to think of

the time when an influence, pure and gentle as hers, soothed the turbulence of his early manhood.

"Blanche," he says, simply, "it was just such a night as this—long, long ago, my dear, before you were born—that I won a wife for the asking."

The little hand laid upon his arm presses it gently in token of sympathy; the girl's thoughts, which have been busy with her own concerns, leave them instantly, in grateful response to the confidence with which he honours her.

"Her pictured face is very lovely and very lovable," she replies. "You must have cared for her dearly."

"So much that whilst she lived I shaped my life exactly as she willed. So much that when she died life became a kind of purgatory, and I behaved like a demon in torment. You must know, Blanche, that I have been a fearfully wicked man. I often wonder whether you, being almost sinless, are not very hard in condemnation of my old self."

She does not verbally repudiate the compliment, she lets it pass with a wise, regretful smile.

"How could I be hard upon you who have treated me so kindly? I have heard things about you, Lord Malbreckthane, that I am not sure that I understand. To me you have always seemed not wicked but good. You have done so much since mamma and I came here to make me happy."

"Are you happy, Blanche?"

"Is there such a thing as earthly happiness?" she asks, evasively.

"There is," he answers, with prompt assertion. "Once I enjoyed it, and even now it seems for the second time almost within my grasp. You fence with my question."

"Perhaps I do."

"We have been such firm allies, and I am so much your senior, that I may venture to say things which would otherwise convey an impertinence. Of late it has often occurred to me that you—I do not like the phrase, but another does not suggest itself—that you have fallen in love."

"No," answers the girl, quickly.

But the earl does not seem to heed that ready negative.

"You have known so few men intimately that I was for some time at a loss to find a Romeo for my Juliet. I thought first of Ferrars—"

Miss Carew laughs gently.

"But I hardly wasted a second thought on him. Then it flashed upon me, like sudden inspiration, that St. John Darrell—"

"No—no—no!" interrupts Blanche, in a pathetic crescendo of denial.

"Is the kind of fellow who might attract a young girl's fancy. He is very poor, and so are you; but I am his kinsman, and (as I said before) your ally. I can smooth the money difficulty, my dear, without feeling it, if—"

He pauses, for Miss Carew has suddenly withdrawn her hand from his arm, and has come to a dead halt. He can just see that her face is pale and agitated, but her voice rings out with an accent of emphatic truthfulness.

"My lord, were you to endow Mr. Darrell with the whole of your great wealth, I could not become his wife."

"Not if (pardon the question, dear child, remembering how truly solicitous I am for your welfare), not if Darrell eagerly desired the union?"

"Not even if earthly happiness were possible, and—his—depended upon it."

There is a curious eagerness, as of suppressed anxiety, in the earl's tones, and the firmness of the girl's reply is tempered by surprise, as well as by pathetic resignation. They are true allies, as he has said; there is a certain kind of sympathy between them, and their relations have been of such a character that she feels towards him almost filial affection.

But they miss the magical rapport which establishes between two souls such affinity that each is of each the other self. Neither understands; each is, as it were, groping in the dark.

If the suppressed, yet eager anxiety of his last question caused her faint surprise, the next one simply stuns her with amazement.

"Then there is yet a chance for me. Blanche, will you be my wife?"

She stands there, looking at him in stupid wonderment. She lets him take her hand, and it does not occur to her to withdraw it from his grasp. She is not thinking, she is not feeling; she is in a state of mental paralysis, and he realises the fact so little that he grows jubilant, and almost eloquent with hope.

"That is what I meant by saying that the bliss I once enjoyed seems for the second time almost within my grasp. Blanche, it would be a draught of the elixir vite, it would be a new lease of life, it would be a vision of infinite delight, a hope to make an old man young, if you would promise to become my wife."

Still she does not speak, or draw her hand away, but she shivers as she stands, shivers in the balmy night air. She is awakening from her stupor to a bewildering consciousness that within him who has almost taken the place of the father she scarcely knew embers are yet smouldering of fire and passion which made the earl's rash, hot youth and fierce, turbulent manhood the talk of the country-side.

But my lord of Malbreckthane, though not ready of intuition, has perceived his error. The experience of many years stands him in good stead; he remembers that it does not beseem a gray-haired lover to be so ardent as a boy of nineteen. To the best of his ability he has thought out and planned this declaration, deciding that his fairest chance of success will be to retain as far as possible the mild, paternal role in which he has earned Miss Carew's affection.

"I know that I demand a great sacrifice," he continues, thoughtfully, "and I know also that in a title, in riches, and in the probability my second wife may in a few years be left a widow, you will not find an equivalent for that sacrifice, as a more worldly-minded person might do. I do not want to bribe you, Blanche, to the commission of a wrong. I would not ask you to marry me if I thought you could not care for me a little."

"Not in that way. Oh, not in that way!" she cries, finding speech at last.

"On the score of affection I shall not be exacting. I am convinced that conjugal love is never made up of equal proportions, and I can comfort myself with the axiom that it is more blessed to give than to receive. You would make me a good and faithful wife, Blanche, notwithstanding the disparity in our ages, and I know enough of your disposition to be quite sure that in sacrificing yourself to assure another's happiness you would earn lasting content."

The girl is silent, considering a view of the subject which had not presented itself. The earl sees his advantage and hurries on.

"I entreat you to believe, dear, that although I have learned to love you so entirely that refusal means the bringing of my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, I do not selfishly study my own inclinations alone."

"I do believe it, my lord. I thank you for the honour of your choice, but I cannot love you, except as a daughter. I cannot be your wife."

"If you had cared for St. John Darrell," pursues the earl, regardlessly, "I would have buried fathoms deep my love and my hope. I entreat you to believe, Blanche, that I would have made him a rich man, and have smoothed the path to your union, though I broke my poor old foolish heart in the attempt."

"I do believe it," cries the girl again, touched by the trouble in his breaking voice.

Impossible as she feels his prayer to be, she would give ten years of her life if that might grant it.

"Therefore I say, in your interests as in my own, be my wife. Do not answer hastily, take time for consideration, confer with your mother and your friends, and let me know the result a week or a month hence. I beg of you," he continues, hastily, as though to check the refusal

which trembles upon her lips, "I beg of you, not another word to-night. The proposal to make you Countess of Malbreckthane is not one to be dismissed as lightly as an invitation to afternoon tea."

As though to intimate that their conference is for the present at an end, he lifts the little hand he has so long held a prisoner, and, bending above it with stately, old-fashioned courtesy, presses it to his lips. Then, laying it upon his arm with equal formality, he conducts her, in a significant and eloquent silence, towards the distant lights of the mansion over which he has just asked her to reign.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MY LADY'S LETTERS.

Trides, light as air.
Are to the jealous confirmation strong
As proofs of holy writ.

LADY DUNRAVEN has not as yet extracted much satisfaction from the tête-à-tête with her "Knight of the Sombre Countenance," upon the prospect of which she seized with so much avidity.

He has been triste and stupid to a degree. He has answered her witty sallies with monosyllables, her half-playful, half-tender confidences with silence. Lady Dunraven begins to fear that this long saunter in the balmy gloaming, through copse and meadow, and the enchanted wood, will be entirely barren and unproductive.

"What ails you?" she cries, at length, with sprightly petulance. "I have never seen you in this mood before. What is the matter? Are you ill, or glum, or angry, or worried?"

"Need I confess my worries?" he answers, evasively.

All this time he has been debating the expediency of taking her to task for that spiteful falsehood about Blanche Carew, and still he cannot decide whether it would be wise or foolish so to do.

"I think so," she answers, gently. "That would be in the bond, would it not? since we are friends. Tell me the greatest of them."

"The greatest is that I am poorer than Job was in the days of his affliction."

"And you would not tell me," she rejoins, reproachfully, "lest I should prove a Job's comforter. You would not tell your friend."

"Job's comforters were Job's friends," is the mocking retort. "Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, Zophar the Naamathite—a precious trio. They sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights and none spake a word."

"No woman could do that," she interrupts, with a smile. "I am prepared to laugh or to mourn with you, but not to sulk. Is your plaint of poverty a jest? I know that you won five thousand pounds on the Derby; you cannot have spent it yet."

"The plaint is grim earnest. My affairs were so hopelessly involved that I went in for a mining speculation, and sunk the five thousand pounds in shares of the Esmeralda Silver Mining Company, hoping to see the amount quadrupled in course of time. A paragraph in to-day's 'Times' informs me that the mine is abandoned, and the shares are worthless. All the pretty yellow chickens, from which I hoped so much, are gone at one fell swoop. I am literally a beggar."

"Beg from me."

St. John Darrell winces, but hardly with pain, certainly not with any feeling of anger. In speaking those three short words Lady Dunraven's voice trembles and breaks with deep emotion. Glancing at her handsome face he discovers an expression of which he had hardly thought it capable, one of pure and tender womanly compassion. It refines and exalts her order of beauty. Never has he seen her to such advantage, never has his cold heart been so near a sentiment of affection for the woman who loves foolishly but well, as when she formulates

a proposition which might well have moved him to haughty wrathfulness.

"Do you remember," she continues, gently, "that when we were only distant acquaintances we chanced one day to discuss friendship?"

"I have forgotten," he answers, carelessly.

"But I shall never forget. You said 'Call no man friend, Lady Dunraven, until you feel that if you and he were starving and you became possessed of a penny loaf, you would break it and give him the larger half. Mr. Darrell, I am your worthy disciple, and we are friends. If you and I were starving and I had a penny loaf I would make you eat the whole.'"

"Hush, do not say such things."

"Why not, when they are true? I am not starving, for I did not sell myself to Sir Miles for nothing. My separate income is two thousand pounds a year. That is my loaf, and you will be false to your own creed if you refuse to take half."

"You should know that it is quite impossible," he replies, hastily.

"It is not impossible. If my property were not vested in trustees I would sell half of it and give you the proceeds. As it is, I can only share the income. I ask nothing in return. If you like you can go away and never see my face again. But we shall still be friends, and you have no right to refuse."

"Then I will refuse without a right. Dear Lady Dunraven, do not pain me by further entreaties to which I cannot accede. The case is not desperate. Malbreckthane's purse and interest will be at my disposal for the asking. The greatest of my worries is a small one after all."

"It has made you very silent and preoccupied all the evening."

"Are you so good a logician," he asks, smilingly, "that you can always reason correctly from effect to cause?"

"Then what has troubled you?"

Again St. John Darrell hesitates. Shall he venture to utter kindly words of rebuke and warning? or shall he harken to the still small voice of worldly wisdom, which suggests that to pose as Blanche Carew's champion may incite a woman of jealous temperament to embarrassing suspicion of the nature and extent of his interest in the young lady.

"I heard every word of your conversation with Mrs. Mildensbank, who is notoriously the worst scandal-monger within fifty miles, concerning Malbreckthane and Miss Carew. Shall I tell you the kind of story which will be going round after to-night amongst all the people we know?"

"If you like," she answers.

He is watching her face keenly, that he may if possible discover the exact impression produced by his words and shape them accordingly. He notes that a guilty flush suffuses her features, but her voice does not falter, and she looks straight before her at some object in the distance.

"It will be said that Mrs. Carew's ultimate design in taking up her abode at Preston Castle was to throw Ferrars and her daughter together, in the hope they might fall in love with each other, but that Blanche Carew, playing her own ambitious game, aimed at Lord Malbreckthane himself, and that their appearance together in public is only a prelude to the announcement that her plans have been crowned with success."

"Well?" murmurs Lady Dunraven, absently, and still with that steady stare as at some object in the distance.

"It is not well," cries St. John Darrell, almost with indignation. "To invent and propagate so unwarrantable a calumny is a littleness unworthy of you. There is not a scrap of evidence—"

"Would you believe that of your own senses?" she interrupts, with a low laugh of blended triumph and amusement. "Mr. Darrell, you have been strangely blind; must I open your eyes? Look yonder!"

She points along the path to where, just visible in the twilight, two figures are standing, hand clasped in hand. St. John recognises them with angry incredulity.

"We had better wait here a few minutes or retrace our steps. It would be a pity to interrupt so delightful and so loving a tête-à-tête," suggests Lady Dunraven.

"Nonsense!" exclaims Darrell, arresting his steps nevertheless. "Imagination runs away with you. Malbreckthane always treated Miss Carew as though she were his own daughter—"

The sentence comes to an untimely conclusion. The latter of the two figures bending above the hand he holds is raising it to his lips. Lady Dunraven laughs again, gleefully.

"Yes, the British paterfamilias is rather in the habit of holding long private conversations with his daughter, squeezing the young lady's fingers the while, and kissing them as an appropriate and effective climax. Almost from the first I have correctly interpreted the earl's paternal tenderness."

St. John Darrell does not answer. The two figures are strolling away arm in arm, and he stands looking after them until they vanish in obscurity. Lady Dunraven searches his dark, reposeful face, but the scrutiny is not rewarded, it is quite expressionless.

"I think we may venture to follow now," he says, at length, with the languid, drawing serenity of accent she knows so well. "Probably you are right and I am wrong. In such matters women have sharper intuition than men can claim. But I would ask you as a personal favour never again to say or even to think that Miss Carew has angled for a coronet she is in every respect most worthy to wear. Believe me, she is absolutely incapable of the derogatory ambition you have attributed to her."

Then it is Lady Dunraven's turn to be silent, and as the shades of evening deepen around them both are thoughtful and taciturn. Yet although the walk ends almost as it began she is not dissatisfied, and my lord of Malbreckthane, meeting her with a packet of letters in his hand, is so struck by the radiance of her beauty that he pays her a clumsy compliment.

"Here are the important missives about the delay of which you were grumbling, Lady Dunraven. However joyful their contents they cannot, I am sure, make your bright eyes shine more brightly."

"We shall see," she cries, gaily, dropping him a mock courtesy, and proceeding to open a large blue envelope.

"Messrs. CHANCELL and BLAKE feel it to be their painful duty to hand Lady Dunraven the enclosed letter, and to inform her that there can be little doubt but the unfortunate steamship 'Sea Nymph,' which sailed from Boston on the 1st ult., was run into and instantly sunk with all hands four days afterwards."

"What can it mean?" she asks, wonderingly; and with that she proceeds to unfold a second epistle, written upon thin notepaper, headed "Boston, U.S.," in caligraphy she knows too well.

"GENTLEMEN,—Just a line to acknowledge your note, and to say that the matters therein referred to may be left till I see you, which will probably be within a few hours of the receipt of this letter, or perhaps before, as I am about to race it across the Atlantic. My traps and specimens are already on board the 'Sea Nymph,' and in three hours we shall be steaming out of harbour. I am, gentlemen,

"Faithfully yours,

"MILES DUNRAVEN."

"Nay, that is not fair," exclaims the earl, who has been pretending to watch for the additional brightening of his guest's bright eyes, but she resolutely turns her back and hides her face. She would not have him witness the exultation caused by the perusal of those two letters, the certificate as it were of her husband's death.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE WITCHES' "POOL."

Heavily I rose up, as soon
As light was in the sky,
And sought the black, accursed pool
With a wild, misgiving eye;
And I saw the Dead in the river bed,
For the faithless stream was dry.

THAT eccentric entomologist, Mr. Miles, has already had a grand day of it, although it is only twelve a.m. His wicker basket is full of fresh specimens, his gauze butterfly net is torn in three places, and Mr. Miles himself, stretched upon a bed of moss warmed by the noontide beams of a September sun, is dead tired and fast asleep.

Dead tired and fast asleep at twelve a.m! The fact may seem preposterous to some of us votaries of fashion, of dissipation, of midnight study, who at that hour have just emerged from our dressing-rooms and are dawdling over the "Standard" and the matutinal coffee. But Mr. Miles, the entomologist, is wiser in his day and generation than we are in ours.

On! it is a rare summer life—the life of Robin Hood, of Hereward le Wake—the life of the greenwood.

To rise before the stars go in, or the cock crows, or tuneful larks begin their song of praise; to watch Nature's great awakening and see the morning mists roll back before the sun; to inhale energy and strength with the pure morning air; to brush with happy, careless feet sparkling dewdrops from bush and blade; to chase startled rabbits to their retreat, and rouse sleepy pheasants whose doom is drawing near.

Whatsoever our hand findeth, to do it with our might—(catch insects for example)—and afterwards to rest awhile from our labours, devouring oat-cakes with more relish than ever we have eaten pâté de foie gras, and quaffing great draughts of milk as though it were the nectar of the gods. Then to curl one's self up at twelve a.m. and sleep placidly in the sun from sheer exhaustion!

Mr. Miles awakes from his slumber with a start. His sense of hearing is trained like that of a backwoodsman to acuteness and vigilance. The tread of distant feet, the sound of distant voices awake him. Hastily concealing wicket basket and gauze butterfly net beneath spreading ferns he makes for the thickest of the trees around him and climbs it with cat-like agility.

It is a feat which would become a schoolboy better than it does this venerable silver-haired little gentleman, but nobody is near to wonder or to laugh. And it is an act of espionage which would baffle a detective rather than an entomologist, but in truth the two rôles are curiously blended in the person of Mrs. Dykes's lodger.

He listens with interest to all the gossip that garrulous woman rejoices to retail concerning the inmates of Preston Castle. He knows their incomes and their outgoings, and from the woods which fringe all the approaches he plays the spy upon their movements with curiosity that never flags.

At night he grows bolder, even to the extent of prowling about the mansion and watching from outer darkness that which is taking place in lighted rooms, the window shutters of which are generally open and the curtains left undrawn to admit the cool air of evening.

Hidden amongst the spreading boughs of the tree he has climbed he peers through the leaves at the path below.

"There is no fool like an old fool," mutters Mr. Miles, grimly.

He has caught a glimpse of Lord Malbreckthane and Blanche Carew walking slowly towards him and talking earnestly. The earl is dressed with greater care than usual. He wears an air of youthfulness. His rugged features are softened with an expression of lover-like devotion.

"I suppose it is true that the girl is going to marry him; but she does not look particularly elated at the prospect," thinks the watcher in the trees.

More footsteps, the sound of a woman's voice

rippling with laughter, and of a man's, languid and a little weary. Mr. Miles, pushing the green spectacles high upon his forehead, stares at Lady Dunraven and St. John Darrell and shakes his fist fiercely.

"The shameless woman has not even gone into mourning for her husband's death! The longer she affects incredulity the shorter the period she will have to wear unbecoming weeds!" is his unspoken comment.

The tread of feet and the sound of voices die away. The entomologist is about to descend when the action is arrested by the sight of another couple, who have come so softly he was not aware of their approach.

A girl of petite figure and clear brunette complexion, whose arch beauty is softened to infinite tenderness, and a young man whose gauntness and pallor bespeak him an invalid, and whose face, so patient, so strong, so stamped with true nobility, has lost for a while its lines of sorrow or of remorse, and tells only of calm happiness.

Silently they approach, silently they pass and disappear, but the silence says more than words.

Mr. Miles, forgetting his recent anger, rubs first his green spectacles, which do not need it, and next his old eyes, in which unbidden moisture has gathered.

"He has a look of his mother," he murmurs. "God bless the boy!"

Then he descends nimbly from his perch, recovers basket and net, and strides into the wood. Lady Dunraven's merry words have told him the destination of the party, and he knows of a short cut which will bring him thither before them.

It is a crumbling ruin which once was a monastery. The four outer walls are still standing, although the roof is gone. In the centre, upon a carpet of moss, servants are laying a white cloth, whilst Mrs. Carew and Mrs. Trollope, whom Ferrars has driven to the spot in an open wagonette, are superintending operations.

Evidently an *al fresco* picnic is in preparation, and Mr. Miles, after brief self-communing, remembers that the ivy-grown aperture opposite, which once was a window, is screened by a bush which should offer a safe hiding place.

Stealthily he makes a *détour* and gains it. Even if discovery should ensue he can pretend to be in the act of securing some rare moth. By this time his shabbily and anciently-attired figure is well known to everybody by sight or by description as that of a harmless, scientific madman.

His place of concealment is well chosen. He hears the gay greetings, the merry badinage, the popping of the champagne corks, and when the repast is fairly begun he takes a cautious observation and finds that his window commands a view of the revellers.

His eyes flash, his brow lowers with anger as he notes their disposition. It is said that lookers-on see most of the game, and certainly Mr. Miles sees that in Lady Dunraven's face and manner, as she converses with St. John Darrell, which drives him almost frantic with fury.

The feast is ended. The gentlemen, in attitudes suggestive of indolence and ease, smoke tranquilly, whilst Mrs. Carew narrates, with frigid quietude which renders it yet more impressive, a ghastly legend about a tarn they are to visit presently.

It is a horrible story, how that in the old days when superstition was rife in the land twenty old women, accused of dealings with the Evil One, were bound hand and foot by the monks and drowned one by one, and how that ever since the water and the land in its immediate vicinity have borne the curse one of those unhappy souls laid upon them.

"Hurrah for the Witches' Pool! Let us visit it whilst the spell of the tale is still upon us!" cries Lady Dunraven, with forced gaiety, springing to her feet.

The others rise also. Ferrars volunteers to act as guide, and they follow him in a body. There is no attempt to separate in couples. Somehow that weird legend has impressed them all almost

painfully. They keep together; the effect will not be shaken off.

There are no paths. They have to force their way through brake and briar; the ground is rough, the bushes and the vegetation are stunted. Mrs. Trollope complains dolefully, but the others are almost silent. It seems to some of them that the place still bears the impress of the witch's curse.

This is the "Witches' Pool," this eerie-looking sheet of water, black and willow-fringed. So still, so desolate is it that even on that bright, warm day they shudder at the sight, as though its depths concealed nameless horrors. Only Ferrars seems comparatively unimpressed.

"There is something in the water, on the other side, within a yard of the bank, just opposite that opening in the willows!" he cries. "We can get round that way and see what it is."

Still in silence they follow him. The willows grow so thick that the pool is screened until they reach en masse the opening of which he spoke.

"Oh, my God!"

The exclamation is from St. John Darrell. He is the first to recognise that swollen, half-immersed mass as the figure of a woman—a drowned woman, attired in the hideous black garb and white-lined head-gear of a Protestant sisterhood!

(To be Continued.)

OUR COLUMNS FOR THE CURIOUS.

A PRODIGIOUS EATER.—"Derby Mercury," No. 41, Dec. 12, 1745.—The following account of the great quantity of meat and drink ate and drank by a boy of eleven years of age, son of a gentlewoman at Barnsley, was kept by herself by order of the doctors, who sent the same to Dr. Mead for his advice. He eats and drinks as much every day, and yet is so weak that he cannot stand alone, and is not perceivable to be either better or worse for the last two years; he cannot keep anything down above ten minutes. Thursday, October 11, 1744, beer, water, and milk, 52 lbs. 4 oz.; bread, meat, treacle and fruit, 17 lbs. 4 oz.; total 69 lbs. 8 oz. Friday, October 12, bread and meat 15 lbs. 14 oz.; beer, water, and milk, 41 lbs. 8 oz.; butter and sugar, 2 lbs.; total 59 lbs. 6 oz. The total on Saturday was 58 lbs. 8 oz.; on Sunday, 76 lbs. 8 oz.; on Monday, 58 lbs. 12 oz.; on Tuesday, 55 lbs. 8 oz.; the quantity ate and drank in six days being 379 lbs. 2 oz.

OLD SHOPS AND THEIR SIGNS.—The custom of noting inns by signs was succeeded by similarly distinguishing the houses of traders; consequently in the seventeenth century sign painting flourished, and the practice of the "art" of a signpainter was the most profitable branch of the fine arts left open to Englishmen. The houses in London not being numbered, a tradesman could only be known by such means; hence every house in its great leading thoroughfares displayed its sign; and the ingenuity of traders was taxed for new and characteristic devices by which their shops might be distinguished. The sign was often engraved as a heading to the shop bill; and many whimsical and curious combinations occurred from the custom of an apprentice or parter in a well-known house adopting its sign in addition to a new device of his own. These signs were sometimes stuck on posts as we see them in country inns, between the foot and carriage way. In narrow streets they were slung across the road. More generally they projected over the footpath, supported by iron work which was wrought in an elaborate, ornamental style. A young tradesman made his first and chiefest outlay in a new sign, which was conspicuously painted and gilt, surrounded by a heavy, richly carved, and painted frame, and then suspended from massive decorative

ironwork. Cheapside was still the coveted locality for business, and the old views of the favourite locality are generally curious from the delineation of the line of shops and crowd of signs that are presented on both sides of the way. . . . The mercers, hatters, and shoemakers made their places of business distinguished by throwing out poles, such as we see at the shops of country barbers, at an angle from the shop front over the footpath, hanging rows of stockings, or lines of hats on them. When a shower came, these could at once be hauled in and saved from damage; but the signs swung and grated in the breeze, or collected water in the storm, which descended on the unlucky pedestrian, for whom no umbrella had as yet been invented. The spouts from the houses, too, were ingeniously contrived to condense and pour forth a volume of water which wavered in the wind, and made the place of its fall altogether uncertain; a few rough, semi-globular stones formed a rude pavement in places, but it was often in bad condition, for each householder was allowed to do what he pleased in this way, and sometimes he solved the difficulty by doing nothing at all. The pedestrian was protected from carriages by a line of posts, but he was constantly liable to be thrust into the gutter, or driven into a doorway or shop, by the sedan-chairs that crowded the streets, and which were thoroughly hated by all but the wealthy who used them, and those who profited by their use. It was in the early part of the reign of George the First (1714) that shops began to be closed with sash windows, allowing them to be open in fine weather, but giving the chance of closing them in winter and during rain. And a great improvement succeeded the old and expensive signs. This was numbering houses in a street. The first street so numbered was New Burlington Street, in June, 1764. The fashion spread eastward, and the houses in Lincoln's Inn Fields were the next thus distinguished.

A DROLL BISHOP.—Dr. Thomas, who died Bishop of Salisbury in 1766, was a man of humour and drollery. He married four times. The motto or "poesy" on his wedding-ring at his fourth marriage was:

If I survive
I'll make them five.

At a visitation he gave his clergy an account of his being married four times; "and," says he, cheerfully, "should my present wife die I will take another, and it is my opinion I shall survive her. Perhaps you don't know the art of getting quit of your wives. I'll tell you how I do. I am called a very good husband; and so I am, for I never contradict them. But don't you know that the want of contradiction is fatal to women? If you contradict them that circumstance alone is exercise and health to all women. But give them their own way and they will languish and pine for want of this exercise." He squinted much. He was entertaining the company with a humorous account of some man. In the midst of his story he stopped short and said, "the fellow squinted most hideously;" and then, turning his ugly face in all the squinting attitudes he could, till the company were upon the full laugh, he added, "and I hate your squinting fellows!" He once related a circumstance which happened to himself when he, as a young man, was curate of a church in Thames Street. "I was burying a corpse and a woman came and pulled me by the sleeve in the midst of the service. 'Sir, sir, I want to speak to you.' 'Prythee,' said I, 'woman, wait till I have done.' 'No, sir, I must speak to you immediately.' 'Why, then, what is the matter?' 'Why, sir,' said she, 'you are burying a man who died of the small-pox next my poor husband, who never had it!'"—"Gentleman's Magazine."

WEARING WIGS.—Writing of dress in the time of William the Third, Hone says the peruke was the greatest article of extravagance. It was of French origin, and was now expanded to an enormous size. Louis the Fourteenth wore a profusion of false hair. A preposterous wig was so necessary to this great monarch that he was never seen without it; before he rose from his bed his valet gave him his forest of peruke,

and even his statues were loaded with enormity of wig. Nothing could be more absurd than the appearance of generals in armour covered to the pommels of their saddles with false hair, frosted with powder. All orders, professions, and ranks were flowing perukes; but the higher the rank the greater the abundance of hair. Boys of rank were subjects to this folly as well as their fathers, and many could barely remember having worn their natural locks. The wig, which was originally intended, like Otho's, to imitate in colour the deficient hair and to hide baldness, was now uniformly white, and by its preposterous magnitude appeared to swell the head to a most unnatural size. If the idea was taken from the vast curling mane of the lion, it ought to have been solely adopted by the military, but the peruke covered the head of the lawyer and the medical man in proportion to the dignity of each. It would have been considered the height of insolence for a counsellor to have worn as large a wig as a judge, or an attorney as a barrister. The clergy took example by their metropolitan. The modest Archbishop Tillotson was wigged, and the fashion descended to the humblest curate. Charles the Second's reign might be called that of black, this that of white wigs. . . . Ladies wore their dresses long and flowing, and were copyists of the French, yet scarcely so much as they have been since. They flounced their coats, a fashion which Mr. Noble whimsically imagines might have been derived from the old artist Albert Durer, who represented an angel in a flounced petticoat driving Adam and Eve from Paradise! The ruffles were long and double, and the hair much frizzed and curled. Jewels, pearls, and amber were worn in the hair; and ear-rings, necklaces, and bracelets ornamented the stomacher and shoulders. The head dress was more like a veil than a cap, and thrown back; the sides hung below the bosom. This head dress gradually diminished to a caul with two lappets, known by the name of a "mob." The shoes had raised heels and square toes, were high on the instep, and worked with gold, and always of the most costly materials. The gloves of both sexes were of white leather worked. The ladies were not encumbered with hoop, but to increase the size behind they wore "the commode," which gave additional grace, it was thought, to the swimming train.

CURIOUS ANECDOTE OF A CAT.—The Rev. J. G. Wood, in his "Illustrated Natural History" (Vol. I. Mammalia, p. 197) says: In the eyes of anyone who has really examined and can support the character of the Domestic Cat, she must appear to be a sadly calumniated creature. My own rather wide acquaintance with this animal has led me to very different conclusions. The cats with which I have been most familiar have been as docile, tractable, and good-tempered as any dog could be, and displayed an amount of intellectual power which would be equalled by very few dogs and surpassed by none; nor is my own experience a solitary one, for in almost every instance where my friends have possessed favourite cats the result has been the same. . . . From putting forward some of these statements I have somewhat shrunk, knowing the incredulity which meets any controversion of a popular prejudice. But it seems a species of cowardice to withhold the truth through fear of opposition or ridicule, and therefore the following narrative is laid before the public simply because it is true, and not because it is credible. As a general rule a cat that is well treated is as kindly an animal as a dog under similar circumstances, and towards young children still more so. There is perhaps no animal which is so full of trust as a cat which is kindly treated, and none which when subjected to harshness is so nervously suspicious. . . . Only a short time ago died one of the most accomplished and singular cats that ever sat on a hearthrug. Her name was "Pret," being an abbreviation of "Prettina," a title which was given to her on account of the grace of her form and the beauty of her fur, which was soft as that of a chinchilla. Pret accompanied her mistress in rather a lengthened journey, and finally settled down in England, not very far from the metropolis. Her mistress

kindly sent me the following account of Pret's conduct during a severe illness: "She was without exception the wisest, most loving and dainty pussy that ever crossed my path. When Pret was very young I fell ill with a nervous fever. She missed me immediately in my accustomed place, sought for me, and placed herself at my door until she found a chance of getting into the room, which she soon accomplished, and began to amuse me with her little frisky kitten tricks and pussy-cat attentions; but soon finding that I was too ill to play with her she placed herself beside me, and at once established herself as head nurse. In this capacity few human beings could have exceeded her in watchfulness, or manifested more affectionate regard. It was truly wonderful to note how soon she learned to know the different hours at which I ought to take medicine or nourishment, and during the night if my attendant were asleep she would call her, and if she could not awake her without such extreme measures she would gently nibble the nose of the sleeper, which means never failed to produce the desired effect. Having thus achieved her purpose Miss Pret would watch attentively the preparation of whatever was needed, and then come and with a gentle purr announce its advent to me. The most marvellous part of the matter was her never being five minutes wrong in her calculations of the true time, even amid the stillness and darkness of night. But who shall say by what means this little being was enabled to measure the fleeting moments, and how did she connect the lapse of time with the needful attentions of a nurse and her charge? The never-failing accuracy of this wise little cat was the more surprising because she was equally infallible by night or day. There was no striking clock in the house, nor was it habit, for her assiduous attentions only began with the illness and ceased with the recovery of the invalid." Such is the simple story of this kindly, sympathetic creature and its labour of love.

DAN LAMBERT.—Mr. Lambert, forty years of age, weight 52 stones 11 lbs. His coffin was built upon two axles and four clog wheels; the window and part of the wall of the room in which he died—on the ground floor—being taken down, he was drawn out with ropes by eight men. The coffin was 6 feet 4 inches long, 4 feet 4 wide, and 2 feet 4 deep; it contained 126 superficial feet of elm. A gradual descent of 12 yards was made to the grave and the coffin wheeled down. The body a few hours after death was almost in a liquid state.—*Southey.*

THE LAST CROMWELL.—On the 28th of February, 1834, died, at the age of 90, Mrs. Susan Cromwell, youngest daughter of Mr. Thomas Cromwell, the great grandson of the Protector. She was the last of Oliver Cromwell's descendants who bore his name. The father of this lady, whose grandfather, Henry Cromwell, had been Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, spent his life in the modest business of a grocer on Snow Hill, London. He was a man of exemplary worth, fit to have adorned a higher station. His father, who was a major in William the Third's army, had been born in Dublin Castle, during his father's tenure of the office of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.

AN INJURED WOMAN.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"A Double Engagement," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XV.

THE LION IN LOVE.

Art thou coy, child? Then on Eros' marble shoulder
Thou canst lay thy head and hide thy blushing cheek,
Should the shelter, when thou turnest thee, make thee bolder,
Why, the rosy lips will not be far to seek.

COLONEL SIR BERESFORD BLANE had seen a face, and it haunted him, and the face that he had seen was Rhoda's, soft with its sorrow, and

bright with health and youth. The colonel saw, and with the seeing felt the warm blood of his generous heart bound on with a quickened impulse, such as he had not known for years.

He had loved before. It would be idle nonsense to insist that he had reached the age of thirty-five without having known what it is to be a woman's slave. No man, unless his blood is as sluggish as a Dutch canal, could pass the years of youth without having found out the charm of woman's eyes, and the alluring, intoxicating joy of her presence.

But his love, like that of many a youth, had been fruitless. A proud woman laughed at him and married a man who, after a brief time of devotion, turned coldly from her and gave his heart to his horses and dogs. Ah! then it was that she bewailed her rejection of the handsome Lieutenant Blane. But it was useless bewailing. She was married, and he far away over the sea, so fought out her remorse and settled down into the life of a wife unloved and unloving—a lot too common in this great world of ours.

But the love of youth is seldom lasting. Man is then of too plastic materials to receive an indelible impression, and after a time Lieutenant Blane, busy with the duties of active service, ceased to mourn over his unrequited love, and laid it aside as we do a terrible sickness, as a thing to think of occasionally and bear in mind its chastening effect.

"I will never love again—never," he said to himself.

Confident of his strength, he did not shun the society of women, and he was strong enough to set his face steadfastly against anything beyond friendship. For, indeed, the task was not so difficult as it might be at home, as the beauties of the "last season" here were the beauties of society there. It is only the men who cannot by any possible means keep single that marry them, and the handsome young officer was a most determined bachelor. Their wiles and smiles had no more softening effect upon him than they would have had upon the Sphinx.

He was just as strong in his resolve when he landed in England, and although he had seen many fresh handsome girls—too many to count—of high and low degree since his return, his heart remained unscathed until that morning when he rode out with Lady Clara and met the young mistress of Powerscourt.

That meeting was fatal to his resolve and to his peace.

He speedily recognised the symptoms, and tried to laugh them down, but the more he inwardly ridiculed them the more assertive they became. That oval face, with the large, dreamy eyes, rose mouth and cheeks, so lightly tinged with pink that nature alone could have put the colour there, haunted him.

He could not shake off the vision; it clung to him as persistently as remorse haunts the guilty soul, and was, in its way, almost as great a source of misery.

He had no idea who she was, but never doubted for a moment that she was a lady, and after a combat with his resolution he began to look out for her in the assemblies he attended. But neither at ball, dinner party, nor in the hunting-field was that face to be met with. There were many handsome, noble women who had eyes ready to beam tenderly for him if he had only said the word, but he was blind to them. He wanted to see that face again, and no other.

Of course only to see it. He had no further object, for it was ridiculous to think that the resolve, hardened by years, would be broken. He laughed at the bare notion, and he was angry with himself for entertaining it, but—he wanted to see that sweet face once more.

Unable to find it in the circle he mixed with, he thought he would make a few casual inquiries, and, after the manner of man, made the awful blunder of making those inquiries of Lady Clara.

They were alone in the library, engaged respectively in writing to friends, when he, looking up, saw that she had laid aside her pen and was folding up her epistles.

"I don't know whether you have noticed my great failing," he said, "but I am about to lay it open before you."

"And what is that?" she asked, with a proud smile.

Angling for him had proved to be very fruitless work, and she was growing weary of it.

"Curiosity."

"The last natural weakness I should have attributed to you."

"Just so, Lady Clara; and that shows I have the uncanny gift of secrecy. But curiosity is my pet weakness. I like to know everything and everybody. Do you remember that ride we took—let me see—tendays ago—the day Starlight slipped with the groom and threw him?"

"I remember it very well."

"We met some people not far from Powerscourt."

The face of Lady Clara suddenly became frozen, and she bent her head stiffly. He was not looking at her, or he assuredly would have halted and said no more.

"Two people, I think," he went on. "One of them was a young girl with a face that on canvas would melt all hearts. What is more, she would make—Do you know her?"

A broken exclamation from his companion caused him to look up, and he beheld her standing by the table with both hands clenched and face livid and furious. It was a strange, incomprehensible change in the handsome woman usually so calm and cold.

"Lady Clara," he cried, "are you ill?"

"How dare you?" she hissed. "I asked how dare you speak of that woman to me? Have you suddenly lost your wits, or are you in league with her?"

"I assure you, Lady Clara," he stammered, "that I do not understand you. If I have unwittingly said anything amiss I beg your pardon."

"Go to Revaine and ask him what that woman is. I could not answer you if I would. Oh, my God! what next shall I have to endure?"

And here the proud, passionate woman sank into a chair and burst into a passion of tears.

The whole thing was as sudden as a white squall in the Mediterranean, and he was as much taken aback as a vessel carrying full sail with a careless skipper on board. Of all things in the world the tears of a woman were most pitiful to him, and in a paroxysm of repentance he knelt before her.

"I had no thought of paining you, Lady Clara," he said. "Oh, forgive me—I beg of you to forgive me!"

"From you of all others, too," she sobbed. Then suddenly brushing away her tears she sprang up and made a step in advance towards the door. "But I do myself injustice by weeping. I ought to resent it, and I do resent it. Revaine shall hear of it, and—"

She paused, for Sir Beresford Blane had risen and stood facing her with a quiet dignity that was a sufficient answer to her reproaches. But he had a few words to say.

"Lady Clara, you ought to know that I could not insult you or any woman upon earth. The simple inquiry I made was uttered in ignorance. I understand now, and I grieve to think of the blunder I have made. It shall not be repeated. Allow me to take my adieu."

"Oh, no," she said. "I am to blame—I was hasty. You must not leave us. Revaine would be vexed, and the earl finds such pleasure in your society, while I—"

She had recovered herself and was acting again, playing her part consummately. She had confessed nothing directly, yet indirectly laid before him an unwomanly avowal of love. He deemed it to be involuntary, and his pity for her redoubled. He was touched by her look, sorry for the wrong he had done, and was ready to atone for it. Without interruption she had gained him for ever.

But as he drew near to her, full of chivalrous

generosity towards one whom he believed he had deeply wronged, Lord Revaine came hurrying in, unconscious of the library being occupied, and therefore in complete ignorance of the malapropos nature of his arrival.

The chance was gone, and Lady Clara made no effort to hold it fast. Bowing with an assumed soft, melancholy air to Sir Beresford she glided out of the room, favouring her brother with a sharp, angry glance as she passed him.

"Came in when I was least wanted, I see," he said. "I hope you won't be angry with me, Blane."

"Not at all, my dear fellow," was the reply. "The fact is I unwittingly offered a gross insult to your sister. I began to ask her what the mistress of Powerscourt—"

"What on earth led you to name her?"

"Not knowing her by sight I recalled to Lady Clara our meeting with one whom I look upon as one of your county belles. You remember we all met her something like a week ago."

"Oh, yes, I remember. She is a pretty creature, is she not?"

"She seemed to me more than that. There are thousands of pretty girls about, but not one in a thousand with a face like hers. It is ethereal; and really it is difficult to believe the story concerning her."

"Oh, the devil knows how to clothe his ministers," said Lord Revaine, with a shrug. "I don't see why you should be surprised. It is not the plain women who lead men to the deuce, but the others, you know."

"True," sighed Sir Beresford. "I might have remembered that. I am deeply and truly sorry that I spoke of her to Lady Clara, and I don't know that I shall be able to look straight into her face again."

"Oh, Clara will forgive you—don't be uneasy. And now come and look at a new horse I have bought, and for which the earl will pay. If you like we will try him at jumping."

But Sir Beresford was not in the humour for inspecting horses, and declining he strolled away. His mind was full of trouble, and he wanted to get his thoughts into order.

So fair, so frail. Yes, he had heard the story from Lord Revaine, and it was a very terrible one; but was it possible that one with a face that to him had seemed to possess a beauty beyond that of earth should be worthy of being scorned and reviled? No, he could not think it possible—and yet—hard facts as they lay before the world were dead against any other conclusion.

"I saw her but a moment," he mused. "She passed me like a fleeting shadow. I may have created in my mind an idealism that does not exist. Perhaps when I see her again I shall find her commonplace enough. I know that I am a sentimental fool, old enough now to give up boyish dreams, and I may have attached to her a charm she does not possess."

"When he saw her again." He was longer in finding her than he anticipated. Half a score times he rode alone and in company past Powerscourt gates and saw no sign of Rhoda, nor heard a word of her from the lips of anyone.

Lord Revaine seemed to have entirely forgotten her, the money-lenders being troublesome again, and but for Sir Beresford's timely help he would have been arrested at Strathlone.

A fortnight fled by and Lady Clara was still angling. The opportunity destroyed by her brother coming into the library, like other great opportunities, never occurred again. Lady Clara had no further excuse for shedding tears. Sir Beresford's presence and his feelings towards her had sunk down to the original dull level of ordinary friendship. They were amiable and courteous when together, but apart he did not think of her, and she, thinking of him, cursed him for his tardiness and coldness.

Lord Revaine came in for several storms of reproaches, which he bore with fraternal philosophy.

"It's your own fault, Clara," he said, "at least, the fault of your nature. Blane is not the sort of man to love a woman who is such a strange compound of the icicle and torch as you are. He is talking again of leaving us."

"Let him go," said Lady Clara, "as soon as he pleases."

"I have pressed him to remain another fortnight," Lord Revaine said, "for he is a good fellow and has been very kind to me. In ten days I have another bill to meet, and I want him to help me."

"You will take help from anybody, Revaine."

"Not at all. I take it from the best source I can get, but I cannot afford to be too particular any more than you can in matrimonial matters. We have both gone a little wrong and must right ourselves in the best way we can. I can tell you a secret if you like about Blane. It may amuse you."

"I can see you mean it will annoy me, but, pray, let me hear it."

"He is spoons upon you know who—clean gone as I am; but it would not do for me to go near her, while he can do what he pleases. He has taken to walking over to Powerscourt before breakfast with the hope of seeing her."

"Thank you, Revaine; it is kind of you to tell me all this."

Lady Clara's face was painfully white, she was inexpressibly tortured by what she heard, but her brother did not spare her.

"So you see, Clara, it is best to be casting your matrimonial eye in another direction. Blane is gone—clean gone."

"But do you think he will marry her?"

"Knowing how thoroughly good and simple he is," Lord Revaine coolly replied, "I should not be at all surprised if he did—provided, of course, that she will have him."

CHAPTER XVI.

BY A FATHER'S GRAVE.

The nightingale sings in the hawthorn tree,
The nightingale is singing in the wood,
But in the hurried beating of my blood
A sweeter voice is sighing to me.

LORD REVAINE had not departed from the truth when he told his sister that Sir Beresford Blane was often near Powerscourt at an early hour.

Haunted by a vision of the face that grew more and more beautiful to him as he dwelt upon it, he oft found himself awake at sunrise dwelling upon it, and the impulse to go out with the hope of seeing Rhoda was too strong to be resisted.

It must be confessed that he had gone so far as to bribe the old woman who kept the lodge gate of Powerscourt Park, and he had gained in return a little information about the habits of her whose image was ever with him.

She was an early riser, and often strolled as far as the lodge and occasionally went a little beyond it, and she was generally alone.

"But Mister Ardant is sometimes with her," the old woman said, "and he is as faithful as a watch dog in looking after her."

"And who is Mr. Ardant?" Sir Beresford inquired, with a slight twinge that he was loth to put down to the right cause—jealousy.

"He is a gentleman as writes books," the old woman said, "but when Mr. Kelly died he became resident agent."

"And does he live at the hall?"

"Yes, sir."

That tinge again, a little sharper than before. He had heard of Kelly's death and knew that he was buried in the churchyard near the village, where the grey old church, witness of five centuries of mortal life, reared its ivy-crowned head.

But the death of the father did not necessitate the residence of Mat Ardant at the hall. In tones of affected indifference he asked the old woman to describe him.

"The name," he said, "has a familiar sound. Perhaps I know him."

"Mr. Ardant," said the old woman, "is a nice, quiet gentleman, with ne'er a harsh word for anyone, not even for an enemy. The tenants are fond of him and say that he is a true gentleman whatever Mr. Kelly may have been."

"And was not Mr. Kelly a gentleman?"

"In his way, sir, but not quite like—the gentlemen we are used to here. He was always very kind to me."

One evening it chanced that Lady Clara and the earl were out at a place where Sir Beresford had not been invited. Lord Revaine was also left out, but he found solace in a little rattling, assisted by a groom, a terrier, and some ferrets. Sir Beresford did not care for the ignoble sport, and went out for a stroll. He had no definite intention when he started, but his footsteps led him to Powerscourt.

He lingered awhile about the gate, and seeing nobody passed on, leisurely strolling, without caring whither he went, and in half an hour or so he found himself on the border of the churchyard, looking over a low wall at its quaint collection of tombstones, old and new.

It was a solemn place to look upon at the hour of sunset. The massive tower with its ivy mantle was crowned with a glory from the sun, but the body of the church, with its thick buttresses and diamond-paned windows, lay in the shade. The tombs also lay hushed in the stillness, and the coarse grass growing thick between was not ruffled by a breath of wind. Around all was still, for there was no house near, and the very rocks whose nests were built in the elms that fringed the western side of the place came home silently and nestled down without a caw.

An impressive scene, that churchyard with its treasures of sleeping men and women and little babes—a touching, saddening store-house of those who HAD BEEN, of those who had lived in this life, mourned as we mourn, laughed as we laugh, loved as we love, and then died and for the most part been forgotten.

There were tombstones with their records effaced, and it is well that some of them were washed away, for lies were printed there, on the spot where the great stone building was erected to preach the truth. How we lie AGAINST men and women living and lie FOR them when they are dead.

Sir Beresford leaning thoughtfully upon the low wall mused awhile upon the past. The scene was congenial to his nature. He loved a little sadness, the sadness that is so sweet to sympathetic minds, and there he could if he would be sad enough.

At first he thought no human being was in sight, but as his eye wandered over the many graves it rested at last upon a slim form half hidden by a large sarcophagus containing the bones of some great man long since dead. It was a woman, and she was kneeling near a spot where the red clay scattered about and piled in one place to a heap of the orthodox shape revealed a newly made grave.

He felt it would be sacrilege to play the spy upon such grief, and turning away he sat down at the foot of a huge oak. In this position the churchyard was hidden by the wall from his view, and he sat there until a glance at the summit of the tower showed that it had lost the light of the sun. Then he arose and looked around.

A cool, sweet twilight rested on the earth and the sky was without a cloud. The leaves being lifeless on the trees, the stillness was more profound than it had been before, and the woman was no longer to be seen.

"She is gone," he thought, "and I may wander among the graves without intruding upon her sorrow."

As he passed through the little gate he found himself wondering in a dreamy way who she was. The truth, strange as it may seem, did not dawn upon him, nor had he an inkling of it until he turned the corner of the western end of the church and found himself face to face with Rhoda.

She was dressed in deep mourning and wore

a bonnet and veil. But the veil was raised and she was endeavouring to decipher an inscription upon a large tablet let into the wall. But it was evidently a puzzle to her, for it was in Latin, and there was so much flourishing about it that it was difficult to pick out the words.

He was walking slowly and upon the grass, so that he came upon her unheard, and he had a few moments' leisure to contemplate her face ere she was aware of his presence. One glance dispelled all doubts as to its beauty and natural refinement. It was more beautiful than when he saw it last, for recent tears had shed a halo of sacred grief around it.

Ay, it was a sweet face—a face to look upon and love, a face to engender in the heart of a man not made of stone a longing to draw it down upon his breast and bid it nestle there until all sadness and sorrow had passed away. Sir Beresford would fain have passed on, but he remained transfixed and spellbound.

Had he any thought of the evil whisperings against her in his heart then? No. He had but one thought as he gazed upon her, and that was how beautiful, how pure, how almost holy she seemed.

Her eyes dropped and met his. Instinctively he raised his hat and muttered some words of apology. She bowed, but uttered no word, and neither moved. The spell had cast itself around both.

"I fear," he said, with an effort, "that you must think I have been guilty of an unpardonable rudeness in intruding upon you."

"No," she said, in a low, sweet voice, "why should I think so? This place is open to all who come here to mourn."

"I have no one to mourn for here," he said. "I came for no particular purpose except to gather such a lesson as I could from the dead. Pardon me, you were reading this inscription."

He saw by her face that her mind had recurred to her father and he quickly introduced something to give her change of thought, and it succeeded admirably. She smiled and shook her head.

"No," she said, "I was not reading it. I was not able to."

"You do not understand Latin?"

"No, nor any other language than my own." Her frankness pleased him. There was endearing naïveté in the confession never seen in the scheming woman of the world. Very few people are willing to confess how ignorant they are.

"Will you permit me to decipher it for you?" he asked.

"I shall be very pleased, if not troubling you too much," she said.

"In the first place," he began, after a brief scrutiny of the letters, "one Geoffrey Harvyn lies here, and he died in sixteen hundred and sixty-six. That, by the way, was the year of the great fire in London. Now this Geoffrey was a soldier, it seems, and he fought on the side of the martyr—Charles the First, you know."

"Was he a martyr?" asked Rhoda.

"Do you doubt it?"

"No, only I have heard David Moore say that Cromwell was right. But never mind. Go on, please."

"He fought for the king and lost everything in his cause—except life. That the Puritans kindly allowed him to keep; but they took all his estate away. Ah! these loud brayers of piety have such an eye for loaves and fishes. They took his all and left him starving. After many vicissitudes he gained work in London, and lived through to the Restoration. Then he went to the king."

"And what did he do for him?" asked Rhoda.

"Nothing," replied Sir Beresford, "for Powerscourt."

"Powerscourt?"

"Yes. Powerscourt had been given to one Argant Sutherland, and Geoffrey Harvyn went back to his attic and died of a broken heart. The people, the poor people here heard of his story and put up this tablet to his memory. A sad story, is it not?"

"Very sad," said Rhoda, with a sigh.

So easily had they glided into conversation that she forgot it was a stranger who was engaging her attention, and he did not remind her of it. How could he, when every moment was an hour of joy to him? Oh! why did the twilight deepen and darkness creep upon the earth?

Rhoda awoke from a reverie with a start and moved on a little. As she did not bow an adieu, he walked by her side, and so they went together down the narrow path between the graves.

"It is strange to find so much romance in our somewhat prosaic land," he said.

"Is it more prosaic than other places?" she asked.

"Yes, indeed. The cradle of poetry is far away from here."

"You have travelled, I presume?"

"Yes; I have peeped at most great countries, and I have spent many years in India. That is the land of jewels—the land of true romance."

She looked into his face with all the assured confidence of a child and asked:

"What were you doing there?"

He smiled and said:

"Following the profession of arms. My name is Beresford, and I am colonel of the fortieth regiment."

He seized the first opening to let her know who he was without any definite plans in his head. He wished her to know him by name, and trusted she would be as frank with him. He wanted to hear what name she bore from her own lips. Lord Revaine told him that she gave out none, but was simply called the Mistress of Powerscourt.

But she did not return his confidence, although she seemed pleased to have his. As they reached the gate she turned and held out her little hand.

"It was very kind of you to take so much trouble to please me," she said; "and now I must say good bye."

"It is getting dark," he hinted, "and the roads are lonely."

"Oh, I have an escort," she answered. "See, here he is."

Mat Ardant turned from a bye-path into the bridle road that led past the church with a quick step of one who is a little late in keeping an appointment. The light was growing dim, night was close at hand, and Rhoda being with a companion, he did not recognise her. He expected to find her alone, and was passing on when she spoke to him.

"You are late, Mr. Ardant," she said.

"Pardon me," he said, starting and frowning slightly as he looked at Sir Beresford, who was closely scrutinising him in return, "I thought you had come alone."

"We will go home at once," Rhoda said, and exchanging a bow with the baronet, left him.

Surely he could not have left her mind as soon as she turned away, but she neither spoke of him nor referred to him during the walk back to Powerscourt. As she did not open the subject Mat Ardant was too wise and courteous to do so.

But he chafed terribly, and the discovery he had made suddenly wiped out a little dream he had been indulging in. He loved Rhoda as fondly and sincerely as ever man loved woman, and he knew that he had nothing to expect but friendship in return, but he had hugged the thought that the friendship was to be a lasting one.

Rhoda was to love no man, and he was to be her gallant knight, her faithful squire, her devoted servant, and they were to live in a state of serene happiness that is so seldom found in mundane affairs. And now in a moment he saw a danger signal flying. An enemy was approaching, and had already penetrated the camp.

Jealousy soon takes alarm, and rapidly comes to strange conclusions. No man, not in love, would have argued that a single meeting with an attractive man was dangerous to the



[AN UNPLEASANT QUESTION.]

peace of Rhoda. But Mat did more than argue, he put it down as a certainty, and most unreasonably he hated Colonel Beresford with his whole heart.

If Rhoda had talked of him he would have cared less, but she did not utter his name even. From this the author and critic, a keen and savage critic in this affair, drew the deduction that she was constantly thinking of him; but in this he did Rhoda a great injustice.

She only thought of Sir Beresford occasionally, and then simply as a very pleasant companion, one who had by innate courtesy made himself agreeable to a stranger. She remembered his courtesy, and was grateful for it, and nothing more just then, for her heart was still heavy with recent sorrows. The mourning she wore was a fitting emblem of the woe within.

Her father had always held a place in her heart, and when he died the greatest void she had ever known was made therein. Sir Archibald she had grieved for, as much for his own sake as hers. It was a shocking thing for him to be taken away with the sin he had been guilty of yet fresh and green; but for that raffish parent she had nothing but deep and unselfish love.

For a week Rhoda scarcely left her domain, and Mat Ardent in a quiet way encouraged this retirement. He had been watching, and found out that Colonel Beresford was not satisfied with having met Rhoda, but was pursuing her as well as he could, haunting the outskirts of the park, the churchyard, and the road between. So he kept the mistress of Powerscourt at home as much as possible, and did it in a way that failed to excite her suspicions.

But it came to an end, and she broke out again from solitude, going out on horseback accompanied only by a groom. Mat had offered to attend her, but she said she wanted to be alone.

"I am such sad society," she said.

"You can never be otherwise than pleasant society to me," he replied.

"It is very good of you to say so," was her rejoinder.

She saw nothing more than friendship in his assertion, and when she was gone, looking incomparably charming in her neat riding habit, the wretched Mat Ardent went and locked himself in his room and gave way to the agony he felt.

"I can't stay here," he groaned. "I was a fool to accept the post; and yet I promised poor Kelly on his death bed to look after her. What can I do? She will go her own way in spite of me."

He pictured her riding out and meeting again with this handsome colonel (he knew who he was by this time), casually as she would think, and then they would ride on together, growing more and more familiar, until the end came. She would listen to him, of course—Mat was sure of it—and an end, good or bad, was inevitable.

He stood up before the glass and looked long and steadily at his homely face and figure. There was no denying it—he was a plain man, without an atom of the Adonis in him.

"Ah!" he said, with a deep-drawn breath, "Kelly knew he could trust her to me; but if I had been like that puppy, who is with her now, I'll warrant, would he have done so? I fear I am indebted to my face for the honour of being guardian to the handsome Rhoda. I was foolish enough to think that my honesty was my recommendation."

He was getting into a sardonical way of thinking. Mat Ardent was losing his better qualities under the influence of an unreasonable jealousy. But he did not let them go without a struggle. He knew he was unjust, and had no right to expect from Rhoda more than he received—her warm friendship. He even tried to think well of Sir Beresford, but the effort was a disastrous failure, resulting in his being yet more embittered against him.

And the colonel had been thinking of him too, charging Rhoda's non-appearance to, Mat Ar-

dant, and breathing all sorts of respectable anathemas against him. Each did the other an injustice, and matters were not improved by an accidental meeting that took place between them.

Rhoda had been out all the morning riding, and Mat, unable to remain at Powerscourt more than an hour after she was gone, also took a horse and rode in the direction he believed she had taken. He was not going to play the spy, but he had an uncontrollable desire to see if she and the hateful Sir Beresford were together. If they were he would turn his horse's head and ride away from her and Powerscourt never to return.

A mile from home there was a narrow lane, so narrow that there was barely room for one horse and a foot passenger to pass. In the case of two horses one would be obliged to go into the ditch. This lane led to a wide stretch of common land, a familiar resort of Rhoda, and there Mat Ardent was sure he would find her.

So he turned into the lane, and half way through it met Sir Beresford, also riding, and in a musing mood. He was in a pleasant frame of mind, for his face was radiant with smiles arising from some agreeable thought. Mat's brow became as dark as night. He could guess the reason for the satisfaction exhibited by that handsome and gallant gentleman.

He rode on until the two horses met and pulled up snorting at each other. Then Sir Beresford awoke from his pleasant trance and looked up. On seeing who it was before him his face became rigid.

"I think, sir," said Mat, "that you will have to go back."

"I am not accustomed to beating a retreat," the colonel haughtily replied, "but if you dismount—"

"Nonsense, man," said Mat, savagely. "I am unaccustomed to dismounting at the bid of another man, and if you don't back or get into the ditch, by George, I'll ride over you!"

(To be Continued.)



[REMEMBRANCES.]

THE
STRANGE HISTORY
OF
LORINDA NICHOLSKI:
A TALE OF MYSTERY.
(A COMPLETE STORY).

CHAPTER I.

"Miss DANGERFIELD, will you have the kindness to seal these notes?" said Princess Ivanovitch to me, her friend and companion, as we sat one cold winter's day in her boudoir in the Palace Ivanovitch at St. Petersburg.

I rose at once and did the required service.

"Now kindly put away my writing materials, cover me with my shawl—not that one—the embroidered Indian Chudah. Give Ffine her cushion, and then commence reading to me that delightful story of George Eliot's you began this morning."

And the princess reclined on the satin cushions of her sofa whilst I wrapped the Indian shawl round her feet and with all celerity began the performance of her other behests.

Scarcely had I taken up the book, however, and resumed my reading aloud than the door opened and a tall, pale, grave-looking young man, with an expression of care and a look of ill-health on his handsome face, entered.

It was Prince Ivan Ivanovitch, the princess's only son, her idol and delight.

"Good morning, dearest mother," he said, in a deep, quiet voice, laying a splendid bouquet of hot-house flowers on the table beside her sofa.

"Good morning, Miss Dangerfield," and he bowed low to me with his usual ceremonious politeness. "I have brought you these flowers.

See, the camellias are finer than I ever remember to have seen them, and the violets—"

"Ah! delightful," cried the princess, kissing her son and inhaling the perfume of the rich purple flowers. "What taste you have, Ivan. No one could have arranged those flowers as you have. How are you feeling, my son? You look wearied."

Prince Ivan laid his hand on his bosom.

"I feel wearied, mother, but I have nothing new to complain of. Want of sleep, want of rest if I do sleep, is my great ailment, and neither De Martel nor Fernholtz—no, nor our own Bascovitch seems able to help me there," and he passed his hand—large, yet finely formed, but to all appearances wasted away by some slow, lingering illness—over his forehead.

The princess looked at him anxiously and affectionately.

"Is your rest as disturbed as ever, my son?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered, "either I do not sleep at all at night, or, to speak more correctly, become acutely, painfully wakeful when evening falls and other more fortunate mortals are sunk in quiet slumbers; or my sleep is filled with dreams which, though I cannot recall them when I wake, are, I feel, sensible, so full of suffering and a nameless horror to me that they wear me far more than mere wakefulness would do," and he paused and sighed deeply. Then suddenly rousing himself said, in an almost eager tone, "Guess who is in St. Petersburg, mother, whom I met at the Slavospkis' last night."

"Indeed I cannot—tell me," replied the princess.

"He remembers you years ago, mother, as the beautiful Bertha Emphoff, and asked after you warmly. I told him my mother was beautiful still—as indeed like many Russians, spite of her five and forty years, she was—and asked him to come to us to-night in a friendly way. You do not receive to-night, ma mère?"

"No, not to-night, my child. Only your cousins, Vera Petrovitch and Anna Statofski, are likely

to drop in. But who is my old admirer?" and the princess smiled.

"No other than the eminent Scandinavian psychologist, Professor Doruthor, the illustrious savant of whom all the world is talking. He met you in Germany, mother, years ago, and—"

"Yes, yes, I remember him well enough, Ivan," and the princess turned pale and crossed herself, muttering a few indistinct words, a charm or a prayer I fancy, for, like many of the Russian aristocracy, she was intensely superstitious. "He had the reputation of being a sorcerer, a magician, a—what do call it?—in those days, Ivan, and now—"

"Now he lays claim to a knowledge of the hidden and mysterious powers of nature, mother, I believe," said the prince; and then, after a pause, he continued, "We talked together much on occult matters last night, and he told me some marvellous experiences he has been through, stranger and more marvellous than those of Home and his school, though the professor himself disclaims any intercourse with or belief in any spiritual or demoniacal powers, you know."

"The saints protect us, Ivan Ivanovitch," replied the princess, looking scared; "but I tell you for a truth that man foretold to me in my youth much that has since come to pass. Could the hidden powers, as you call them, enable him to do that?"

"I know not, mother. What says Miss Dangerfield?" and he turned towards me, smiling.

Now I am a very matter-of-fact person. I have (or had) no belief whatever either in Mr. Home's spiritual mission or in Professor Doruthor's secret and hidden powers of nature, a bit more than I had in our old English legends of ghosts, fairies, and elves, so I shook my head and laughed incredulously.

"I fear, prince," I answered, "that I am one of little faith." Professor Doruthor would find me a very stiff-necked heretic, I fancy, and hard to convert to his views."

"Have you ever studied the subject?" asked the prince.

"No," I admitted, "but I should no more think of studying it seriously than I should of studying astrology or magic."

The prince and princess shook their heads.

"All you English people are very incredulous," said she. "You should have seen what I have seen amongst the what you English call 'mad spiritualists.' Ah! you smile."

"But, princess, think of all the exposures of these so-called mediums that have taken place," said I. "Do they not shake your faith?"

"Not so," replied the prince. "In all trades there are humbugs, Miss Dangerfield, but that does not hinder there being a residuum of honest men among them, I hope. Look at mesmerism; no one doubts the truth of the phenomenon now, though for a time the crowd of charlatans who arose as followers of Mesmer and discredited on what is now universally admitted to be one of the most inexplicable of physical phenomena."

"True," I was obliged to allow, "but—"

"Well, well," said the prince, smiling. "Dorothor will be here this evening, and perhaps will give us a sample of his powers. Would it try your nerves much, mother? or yours, Miss Dangerfield?"

The princess hesitated, but I gave a laughing and most decided reply in the negative, and then the princess and her son conversed together in low tones, and I saw her face grow white and troubled and almost stern, whilst she filled with a grave, wild earnestness, and I knew they were discussing something they felt to be of the greatest moment to each, and seizing on a pretext for escape, I rose and left the room.

As I was going these words of the princess's fell on my ear:

"Can you not forget her, even now, Ivan Ivanovitch? She is not dead—she has left you. She has forgotten you."

And then the door closed behind me, and I sped swiftly along the grand corridor to my own private apartment.

I had been about a year with the princess at this time, but we had been but three months of that period in St. Petersburg. I had joined the princess first at Rome, where she had passed the winter with Prince Ivan, whose health had at that time been even more delicate than it now was. He was suffering, as I gradually came to understand, from some shock, some mysterious sorrow that was wearing him away, and which his mother seemed to fear would gradually drive him into a decline.

He was a strange, wayward, incomprehensible man to me, was Prince Ivan, so polite, so clever, so well educated, yet in other ways so uncivilised. I was always reminded in my intercourse with him of the old proverb "Scratch a Russian and you'll find a Tartar," and I could have imagined him inquiring with the greatest solicitude if the cup of coffee, in which he was secretly administering to you a dose of deadly poison, were sweet enough for your taste, and taking infinite pains to make it so if it were not, smiling at you the while.

The princess was kind and open-hearted as a rule, but narrow-minded, proud and superstitious, and on occasions cruelly selfish. I had heard from time to time vague rumours of some strange trouble that had occurred in connection with the princess's last companion, but I never dared ask a question about her from the princess's friends, and as the only other persons who could have enlightened me on the matter were servants or serfs, of course my lips were sealed and I could only hope I might be more fortunate in my relations with the family than she had been.

Meanwhile my life at the palace was far from unpleasant, and if the princess was at times exigent, and Prince Ivan a trifle morose, why, is it not the fate of everybody, more especially of the race of companions, to have something to put up with in their lives?

I occupied the apartment in the palace usually assigned to the princess's dame-de-compagnie, a large, comfortably furnished room with a pleasant look-out just off the grand corridor of the palace. Everything about me was comfort-

able, not to say luxurious, and one of the princess's serfs, a pretty, active girl of nineteen, was appointed to be my special attendant.

I breakfasted generally in my own room, as the princess rarely rose before eleven o'clock, lunched with her, accompanied her on her drives, and usually joined her in the grand salon of an evening if there was company, or, if she were alone, invariably spent the evening with her.

Prince Ivan would often pass whole days with us and then for days at a time would never leave his room. I was plain, small, and thirty-five, so I suppose the princess did not think my company likely to be dangerous to him, but she was terribly jealous of the influence of other women over him. It never seemed to me, however, that the prince troubled himself about any one woman especially, though he seemed partial to the society of ladies and admired their beauty—and where is such beauty met with as amongst the aristocracy of Russia? But he was the same to all, and, as I said, seemed to have no special preference for any one in particular.

Once as I was passing the door of the prince's private sitting-room, to my surprise (for it was usually kept shut and locked) I saw it standing wide open, and as I passed I caught a glimpse of the interior, but my eyes passed over the luxurious furniture and rich decorations of the apartment and fixed themselves on a full-length portrait that hung at the further extremity of it, and which fascinated me to such a degree that, without any regard to the propriety of my conduct, I stood stock still before the open door to gaze at it.

It was a portrait of a young and lovely woman with a pale, oval face, long, dark hair, perfect features, and the most haunting, melancholy brown eyes I ever beheld. It was these eyes that fascinated me and kept me spellbound to the spot.

They seemed to fix themselves on mine with an expression of agonised appeal, and it was only a sudden noise coming from the inner room, and causing me to start, that broke the spell, and with a guilty feeling I turned and hurried on to my apartment.

This adventure occurred to me a week or two after our arrival in St. Petersburg, and it had quite faded from my mind by the time at which my story commences. I had wondered at times who the young lady might be, but had settled at last in my own mind that she must be a relation—aunt, or sister, or cousin, in all probability, of the prince's—and so dismissed the matter from my thoughts.

As I stood before my dressing-table arranging my toilette previous to going down to the salon where the princess had decided to receive Professor Dorothor and her cousins that evening, my thoughts went back to the fascinating portrait with its wild, imploring eyes; and, I know not why, an uncanny feeling, at which I laughed next moment, came over me, and I looked round half expecting to see the original standing behind me; but, of course, the room was empty save for my presence.

My eye, however, rested on something that lay sparkling and glittering in a deep crack that ran along between the wainscoting of the room and the floor. I stooped and picked it up; it was a locket, a plain gold locket, set with one small diamond and containing a curl of dark hair.

Whom could it belong to, I wondered, and examined it long and carefully by the lamp, and then stood lost in thought before the fire till the sudden entrance of Lisette, my maid, and the ringing of the bell which the princess always used to summon me roused me, and without thinking what I did I slipped the trinket into my pocket and hurried down to the salon.

There I found the princess, dressed in black velvet, delicate lace and pearls, who wanted me to do a dozen little nothings for her, seated beside the fire with the countesses Vera and Anna, her cousins—the former a stout, apathetic woman of forty, the latter a tall, strong, jolly, if rather hard-featured, and strong-minded young person of thirty, with spectacles, and a decided tendency towards the masculine in her attire. The professor had not yet arrived.

They were talking about him as I entered, Countess Anna deriding his secret-force theory, and Countess Vera saying she thought such opinions should be put down by the Church.

In a few moments the door opened and Professor Dorothor entered, and I for one was forced to confess that his appearance, at any rate, inspired confidence and respect.

He was a fine-looking man of five-and-fifty, with a close-shaven, well-featured face, and a pair of small, piercing black eyes that seemed to look one through and through.

We were introduced to him one after another, and he then immediately fell into talk with the princess, Countess Anna, and Prince Ivan, whilst I and the Countess Vera sat by listening.

"Well, but tell us, dear professor," said the princess, after an animated discussion, "is there any one of us who you think would be particularly sensitive to this strange force, call it what you will?"

The professor looked round and smiled.

"You are scarcely to be called sensitive, princess, and the prince decidedly the reverse. The Countess Anna," and he bowed with a laughing air, "would prove too much for it, but stay, this young lady," and he looked at me with a searching gaze which positively startled me, "this young lady is, I should say, decidedly 'a sensitive,' as I call it."

"I!" I exclaimed.

"Miss Dangerfield!" they all exclaimed.

"Why, she is an utter unbeliever in everything. She is a heretic even," added Countess Vera.

The professor remained unmoved.

"Yet for all that I feel certain that Miss Dangerfield is very alive to and easily affected by the power I believe in," he returned. "May I test you?" he continued, turning suddenly on me.

For the life of me, much as I should have preferred it, I could not say no, but gave my consent at once, and by the professor's directions the doors were fastened, the lights lowered, and we sat in a circle, I being exactly opposite him.

He placed something, a piece of metal, in my hand, and bade me look at it steadily. His eyes exercised an extraordinary influence over me, and I obeyed, and for a few minutes a deep silence reigned in the apartment.

I started. Had I been sleeping? What had happened to me? I felt as if I had passed through a period of unconsciousness, and had suddenly awakened with quickened senses in another world, and I felt the presence and existence of but one human being in my new state, and that being was Professor Dorothor. His dark eyes looked full into mine and blazed with a triumphant expression as he laid his hand on my forehead and said "See."

I shuddered and looked around. We were no longer alone in the room; beside the professor, almost touching him, stood a figure enveloped in white drapery from head to foot, from whom emanated an indescribable odour—the odour of the grave—not unnoticed as I perceived by the other occupants of the salon.

The princess shivered and turned pale; the prince looked ghastly. Countess Anna was silent, almost appalled, and Countess Vera crouched beside her, trembling visibly, and holding her hand as if for protection. The professor looked annoyed.

"I should have thought of that before," he muttered, but he did not say what "that" was.

"What do you see, Miss Dangerfield?" he inquired.

I struggled to speak, my vocal powers seemed numbed; then in a voice so strange and hollow that it startled everyone who heard it, I answered:

"I see a figure, tall, white, standing beside you, Herman Dorothor," and I pointed towards it.

"Describe it further," replied the professor.

"I cannot see the face," I answered, "it is covered by a white drapery."

"Tell the being you see to raise the drapery," he commanded.

I obeyed, and slowly the figure raised a long, white hand and removed the folds that hid its face from my view.

As it did so I started, shivered, and I fancy became convulsed, for I remember the princess saying:

"Rouse her, professor, she is ill," and then I was quiet again, but I recognised the face at once, it was that of the portrait I had seen in the prince's room.

"Describe what you see," commanded the professor again.

"A woman," I muttered—"young, dark, very pale, brown eyes, long dark hair, very sad expression."

"Stop her, for God's sake, stop her!" cried the princess, starting forward, for Prince Ivan had sunk back on the sofa insensible, whilst the Countess Anna with a shriek fell to the floor in violent hysterics.

The stance was at an end. In a few moments I was restored to my normal condition, and we busied ourselves with the prince, whilst the Countess Vera led the Countess Anna away to the princess's dressing-room, where under her administrations, assisted by a crowd of serfs and waiting women, the terrified woman was gradually brought back to herself.

The prince too soon recovered, but it was easy to see that my vision had affected him very deeply.

"Let me ask you one question," said the professor, ere we separated for the night, "Had any of you ladies, or you prince, the hair of a deceased friend, or relation about you?"

They all replied in the negative, and I did the same, totally forgetting that in my pocket lay the locket containing a tress of dark hair I had that evening found in my bedroom.

"Strange," murmured Doruthor. "The death-like odour was remarkable."

"Yes, we all perceived it," said Countess Anna, pushing up her spectacles in a puzzled manner. "Well, you are a wonderful man, professor, and Miss Dangerfield is an excellent subject. Do you feel alarmed or fatigued?" she added, turning to me.

"No, only a little dazed, and I confess a little shocked," I replied. "I did not expect or desire to find myself so alive to the 'secret powers,' whatever they may be," and I tried to smile, but shuddered instead as I saw the professor's dark eyes fixed on me.

"You must have a strong rapport with the spirit, or being, or power you saw to-day, Miss Dangerfield," said he. "If you should at any future time see it again will you write and tell me all the particulars of your experience?"

"See it again?" I murmured, in a horrified tone, whilst Countess Anna gave a little scream and looked in a frightened way round the room. "God forbid! But if I do," I added, hastily, "I will tell you," for the commanding spell he had exercised over me was not yet gone, and then he wished us good night.

The two ladies followed suit, and in a few moments we were alone again.

The prince looked serious and agitated, and glanced at me now and then in an uncertain, puzzled manner, as if he would fain have questioned me further on my vision, but dared not. The princess was silent and embarrassed—stern almost in her manner, and in a few minutes left the room, signing to me to follow her and attend her at her toilette, which was one of my usual duties, as was reading her to sleep afterwards if need be; but on this night, as soon as her toilette was over, she dismissed me, and there was a strange constraint in her manner towards me which I noticed with surprise and perplexity.

I was not sorry, however, to be able to retire to the quiet of my own apartment, there to think over my strange experience, for I felt weary and overwrought, and a feeling of I know not what, a dull numbness in my brain, troubled me.

I slept but little that night, and what sleep I had was troubled and restless. I woke ever and anon with a start and a feeling that a white

something was standing beside me, that a faint whisper at my pillow had awakened me that drove sleep from my eyelids, and in the morning I rose looking pale and haggard, and set about my daily avocations as usual, but with an aching head.

And many days passed on. The prince was either away or kept himself shut up in his rooms, and we saw nothing of him. The princess was low in spirits, refused to see visitors, and seemed ill at ease in mind and body, and ere many weeks had passed we left St. Petersburg for a sojourn in southern Europe.

I was delighted at this move, for I hoped to obtain a month's leave of absence from the princess when we should be settled at Caen and to visit England once more, and I set about the preparations for our departure with alacrity.

As I was packing up my belongings and laying my dresses one by one in my portmanteau I felt something in the pocket of one—the one I had worn on the occasion of Professor Doruthor's visit—and thrusting my hand into it I drew forth the golden locket I had picked up on that evening.

Strange! I had utterly forgotten it was in my possession, and the query of the professor, "Has anyone the hair of a deceased friend or relation about them?" recurred vividly to my mind.

We had all answered in the negative. But how did I know that the hair in this locket was not that of a dead person? I resolved to show it at once to the princess, choosing my opportunity when no one was likely to interrupt us.

"Princess," I said, "I have a confession to make."

She looked at me with a smile of languid inquiry.

"When Professor Doruthor was here" (she listened now with interest) "and asked us if we had the hair of any dead friends about us—you remember—I replied 'No,' but I had this in my pocket," and I put the locket into her hand.

She gave a shriek of horror.

"Where did you get this?" she demanded, almost fiercely, pointing to the letter "L" engraved on the back, and clutching my wrist tightly.

"I picked it up in my room just before I came down into the salon that evening, princess. I give you my word," for she looked at me doubtfully. "I put it into the pocket of the dress I then wore, and which has lain in my drawer ever since, and have only just had the fact of its being there recalled to my memory."

The princess turned the locket round and round in her shaking hands, then saying, in a trembling voice, "Not a syllable of this to the prince, Miss Dangerfield, mind, I trust you—it might be his death," turned and with a hurried step left the room, taking the locket with her.

CHAPTER II.

We left St. Petersburg next day, but the increasing ill health of Prince Ivan made our journey a very tedious one, and instead of going direct to Caen, as at first intended, we went first to Rome and then to Florence, where we stayed for several months before taking possession of the Chateau des Hirondelles, which the princess had engaged on the outskirts of Caen—thus I was unable to visit my relations in England at the time I had expected, and when we did arrive at Caen they were away from home, and so it happened that many months passed before I set foot in my native land once more. Indeed, however, had my friends been able to receive me I do not think the princess could have spared me.

The prince required much care and attention, and had taken a fancy to my nursing, and especially liked me to read aloud to him, and for several hours each day I had been so employed.

When winter and spring were well over and the summer had set in, his health seemed to re-

turn and I was less needed, and at last I summoned up courage to ask the princess for a month's congé. It was granted, with some hesitation, and in a few days I was in England again after an absence of nearly three years.

How strange everything appeared to me, and after the grandeur of St. Petersburg and the beauty of the fair southern lands I am obliged to confess that the dull, dirty, prosaic rows and terraces of Camberwell were rather a trial to my æsthetic sensibilities, but the warm welcome I met with from my friends consoled me for the want of beauty in their neighbourhood.

Gertrude Henderson and I were cousins. We had been at school together in our girlhood where we were fast friends, and about the time I left my home to become a companion she left hers to become a governess.

She did not long remain in that position, however, for in a year's time she married a young merchant, and for ten years had been a happy wife.

Three children she had, two girls and a boy, and when I saw her sitting amongst them, cheerful, handsome, and matronly, I decided that after all matrimony was the natural state for a woman, and the happiest, whatever attractions adventure and independence might hold out to her.

The house in which my cousin lived was what is generally in advertisements described as "a genteel semi-detached villa, with garden front and rear," and twenty others to match on either side made up Arkwright Road, in which it was situated.

Outside it presented a curious mixture of various styles of architecture, in which my tutored eye recognised Gothic, Icelandic, and Norman, with a touch here and there of Early English, and the walls were fantastically inlaid with bricks of various colours, arranged in grotesque patterns, and varying from the brightest red to the dullest grey. Inside, however, it was replete with every comfort and convenience, and quite justified Mr. Henderson in saying that:

"If it were not a romantic building, it was at any rate suited to the wants of any matter-of-fact personage of the nineteenth century."

My room was on the second floor over the smoking-room, a cosy little apartment with a cheerful French bed, covered with bright chintz, a marble-topped washstand, duchesse dressing table, muslin curtains, and all the little luxuries of modern times, whilst several pretty chromo lithographs hung on the walls.

"What a dear, cheerful-looking room, Gertrude," I said as I entered it.

"Yes," she replied, with rather a peculiar intonation of voice. "I'm so glad you think so; it has not been occupied for some time, but I've had the bed well aired and the house is as dry as dry can be, above all in this hot weather. Ah! I daresay you don't feel the heat after Italy, but to us it has been quite overpowering," and she threw up the plate glass window as she spoke to let in the cool evening breeze.

I was soon quite happy and comfortable amongst my relatives, and, when I retired to bed that night, slept soundly till morning. I had a strange dream however, which after a few hours of waking came back to me.

I thought I was again in St. Petersburg in my own room at the palace, and that Professor Doruthor stood beside my bed, and beside him the white form I had seen on the night of his visit to the princess. Oddly enough this was the first time the adventure had come back to me in my dreams since I had left Russia, and I got up in the morning with an unpleasant sensation which I could not shake off.

A long day in London however tired me out and made me forget it ere night returned, and even when getting into bed I did not remember it. The last thing I recollected before falling asleep was my eyes falling on a bottle placed on the mantelpiece, on which I saw, written in large letters, "Poison."

"Who could have put it there?" I thought as I fell asleep. Was it not careless to leave a bottle containing a deadly fluid about? I would give it to my cousin to lock up next day. But

when I rose in the morning it was gone. Perhaps the housemaid who brought in my cup of early tea had taken it away with her. At any rate I would mention it to my cousin. Where there were children one couldn't be too careful.

But when I mentioned it to Gertrude she vowed she had no poison in her possession; the servants also denied having anything so dangerous belonging to them, and seemed so surprised at being questioned that I felt quite put out.

"You must have dreamt it, Annie," said Gertrude, laughingly. "You said you only saw the bottle just as you were falling asleep."

"True," I assented, and then I remembered that when searching on the mantelpiece for a match the bottle had certainly not been there or I should have noticed it.

This made me feel very uncomfortable. Was I going to fall a victim to the disorder of optical delusion or what? I said no more however, but resolved to watch that night and see if the mysterious bottle would present itself to my anxious gaze again.

I watched, but in vain, that night and the next, and the next, and then gave it up, quite content to believe that I had, as Gertrude suggested, dreamt a curiously vivid dream.

My troubles however were not over, as I had hoped. On the sixth night I woke suddenly, and there, just in the spot I had before seen it, stood the mysterious phial. I raised myself to make sure I was awake. I heard the rustle of a garment near my bed, the sound as of a long-drawn sigh. I looked fearfully around and when I cast my eyes on the mantelpiece again the phial was gone.

I fell back with a shudder, my head swam, and my heart almost ceased to beat. What had I seen and heard? Then I got up, turned the gas high—I always kept a small jet alight at night—and examined the room carefully.

A more unromantic, unghostly, commonplace, comfortable chamber could not be imagined. Was I dreaming, or mad, or what had come over me? I got into bed again and tried to sleep, but I could not, and the words, the very tone of Professor Doruthor's voice, rang in my ears as he said:

"This young lady is what I call a sensitive." Was I fated to see more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in most people's philosophy? I devoutly hoped not.

I kept my own counsel next morning, and in spite of several joking allusions from Gertrude and her husband to the "magical bottle" as they called it, apropos of my pale looks, said nothing of my experience, and some days passed without my being troubled by any further inexplicable adventures; and then happened to me an occurrence which I shall never forget, the horror I experienced on the occasion having stamped it for ever on my remembrance.

We had had a small evening party, the last before I should leave my cousin's house and return to Caen, for my month's congé was just up, and that morning I had received a long letter from the princess and a note from Prince Ivan begging me to remember I was expected back at the Chateau des Hirondelles by the end of the week and asking me to bring with me certain English books which the prince wished me to read to him.

The party broke up early, as I was to start next day, and ere I went to bed I read over again the list of books Prince Ivan had sent, in order to be certain I had procured them all that day in town, and when I got into bed I left his letter lying on the dressing-table together with my fan, gloves and trinkets.

As usual I locked my door. I was tired, almost too tired to sleep, and the night was close and warm. I had not closed my eyes when a sigh, such as I had heard once before in my room, fell upon my ear and a strange feeling of awe crept over me as the damp, heavy odour of the grave, such as had filled the salon at the Palace Ivanovitch that well-remembered evening, pervaded the room.

I looked towards the fireplace. There stood the tall figure, robed in white, and on the mantelpiece the phial labelled "Poison."

I gazed, not with fear or terror, but with

rapt attention and a feeling of calm awe, at the white-robed visitant; and when the drapery fell from its head I beheld the well-remembered features of the portrait I had seen in Prince Ivan's study.

Slowly the figure raised its white hands and passed them through and through the long, black masses of raven hair that fell far below its waist. How pale and unearthly it looked, white and wax-like as a corpse.

Suddenly the figure glided to the dressing-table. I heard the rustling of paper—my letters were being moved. Then as suddenly it glided back to the mantelpiece and the long, thin fingers clutched the bottle labelled "Poison" and the dark eyes regarded it mournfully. Then, turning towards me and fixed those sad, haunting eyes on mine, she raised the bottle to her lips and with a shuddering groan fell to the earth.

I remember no more, but I suppose I must have shrieked, for I was roused from the swoon into which I had fallen by loud cries and knockings at my door, and found Gertrude and the nurse standing without.

"What is it, Annie? are you ill? What made you give that terrible cry?" she exclaimed.

"The figure," I muttered. "She has taken the poison," and I looked towards the bedside, half expecting to see a real corpse lying on the ground.

Then I recovered myself and quite expected to see Gertrude burst into a fit of laughter, but to my surprise she turned pale and dismissed the nurse, saying she would look after me herself. She threw open the shutters and admitted the first pale rays of early dawn, and then sitting down said:

"Now, Annie, what is it? tell me all you have seen."

I was trembling violently now, so she gave me a dose of salvolatile and made me get into bed again, and I was soon sufficiently collected to relate my story.

"But," said she, when I had concluded, looking very grave and scared, "where is this mysterious phial?"

"I cannot say, Gertrude," I replied, turning my eyes to the fireplace for the first time. Then I added, with a start, "Good heavens! there is my letter. She moved it. I left it on the dressing-table."

And, behold, there lay Prince Ivan's letter, removed from its envelope, just on the spot where I had seen the phial standing.

I was too much overcome by these startling events to set out for Caen that day. My journey was put off till the morrow, and as we sat that afternoon in the cool, pretty drawing-room my cousin, with some embarrassment visible in her manner, reverted to the last night's adventures, and began a strange tale, thus:

"You know, Annie, I am no believer in the supernatural, nor is Herbert either, but there is a very odd circumstance connected with your room which perhaps I ought to have mentioned to you before, only I did not know whether you were of the nervous order of women or not, and feared to frighten you. You have heard me speak of—no, I doubt, though, if you ever have—but you know that at one time we had a German governess, Fraulein Fürstein, who died, very suddenly, in your room?"

"No," I replied, "I never heard of her. Go on; tell me all. Who was she?"

"It's a queer story rather, Annie," replied Gertrude. "Herbert is certainly not given to acting on impulse, but from a sudden motive of benevolence he brought this Fraulein Fürstein into the house, and ere she had been with us two months she died—was found dead in her room. Herbert was walking through Charing Cross station one evening when he was accosted by a young girl, a foreigner, who asked him the way to Highgate. He told her it was far, and she asked him how far, and when he said five miles she sank back on a seat, clasping her hands and saying 'I am lost then; I can go no further,' and then she fainted."

"Herbert, of course, helped to restore her, and was so struck by the extraordinary beauty and sadness of her face, and her peculiarly sweet

manner, that—in short he brought her home to me—and, to tell you the truth, I was not a little put out by his Quixotic conduct. The girl was lovely, certainly, and a perfect lady—you could see that at a glance—and I was not a bit jealous, as some people might have fancied."

"No, I know Herbert too well for that, but I did not know what to do with the girl. She was ill, I could see, and in some terrible distress, which I tried in vain to induce her to disclose. She confessed to me that she was friendless, that she had not a relation in the wide world, that she had been engaged to the son of her late mistress" (I listened eagerly), "and that the marriage, from circumstances into which it was painful to enter, had been broken off, that she had left the house, and now found herself in a foreign land, friendless and penniless."

"We did the best we could with her, and offered her the post of governess to Charlotte and Gerty, which she gladly accepted, and, as she was highly accomplished and well read for so young a person; I hoped we should have found her an acquisition; but her sorrows seemed to weigh her down, and though she strove to hide it, I saw plainly that her health was much impaired."

"I called in our own doctor to attend her. He could find no positive disease, but such terrible general debility that he said any illness, even a comparatively slight one, might prove fatal to her."

"At last, one morning she did not make her appearance at breakfast as usual, and the maid, on going upstairs to call her, found her dead on the floor by the bedside."

I shuddered. It was by the bedside I had seen her fall to the ground in my vision the night before.

"She had been dead for some time, to all appearances," continued Gertrude, "for she had neither undressed nor had the bed been slept in. The strange thing was that she had lighted a fire and burnt most of her little belongings, and stranger still, now I come to think of it, we found pieces of broken glass amongst the ashes. She left, however, one letter, written in German, but apparently she had forgotten to fill up the address, for 'To Prince—' was all that she had written on the envelope."

"And did you never find out anything of her history?" I asked, excitedly.

"No, nothing," replied Mrs. Henderson. "There was an inquest, and the verdict was 'Death from natural causes,' and she is buried in the New Cemetery there, four miles off."

"You never imagined she poisoned herself?" I asked.

"No, certainly not. Why should we have? The coroner's verdict was plain enough. Of course it was a terrible thing to happen in one's house, and upset us quite for some time, and I confess this vision, or whatever it was of yours, Annie, has made me feel very uncomfortable. I shall never like to put anyone into that room again. Herbert must make it his smoking-room. I wonder who Lorinda Fürstein really was?"

"Lorinda?" I exclaimed. "Was that her name?"

"Yes. Why do you ask? Did you ever know anyone of that name? It is not a very common one," replied my cousin.

"No," I answered, "but may I see that letter, Gertrude?"

"Certainly," she replied, and rose to fetch it, whilst I lay back in my chair lost in thought, and filled with a strange certainty that Lorinda Fürstein and the proprietor of the lost locket and the original of the portrait in Prince Ivan's apartment were one and the same person; but yet, if so, why did her spirit haunt me?

Gertrude returned in a few minutes with the letter, and I examined it closely.

"Will you trust me with it for a short time, Gertrude?" I asked. "I believe I have a clue to this mystery within my reach. I must not say more at present, but I think I shall soon be able to tell you all about Lorinda Fürstein."

And I put the letter into my pocket, and next day I bid adieu to my kind friends in Camberwell, and started on my journey to Caen, carry-

CHAPTER III.

ing with me the document I felt sure would lead to the unravelling of the whole mystery, and as I alighted from my carriage at the door of the Chateau des Hirondelles the first person my eyes fell on was Professor Doruthor.

His searching eyes rested on mine for an instant with their usual piercing gaze, and in a moment he made me feel in some inexplicable way that he was my master. He accosted me, however, in his usual polite, calm manner, asked after my health, inquired about my journey, saw my boxes taken off the carriage, and entered the chateau with me.

"I am staying here," he explained. "The prince requires someone to be constantly with him, and has, I am glad to say, taken a fancy to my companionship; but now"—and he bowed to me gallantly—"I must make way for old friends. The prince has been looking forward eagerly to your return, Miss Dangerfield, and I am glad, for his sake, as well as for our own, that you have arrived. You will find him much changed since you left, Miss Dangerfield. He has grown strangely irritable and morose and nervous lately."

"Indeed," I replied, "I am sorry to hear it." And then I added, almost against my will, as it were, "I am glad to have met you here, Professor Doruthor, I have something strange to tell you."

"Ah!" he answered, and his eyes flashed, "I thought as much. What is it?"

But the princess entered at that moment, and, for the time, our conversation was at an end.

I found the princess looking well, but graver and older.

"I am delighted to see you back, my dear Miss Dangerfield," she said, cordially, "and the prince will be the same. He is longing to recommence his readings with you. Ah! you have not forgotten the professor, I see," and a cloud came over her face, and I saw that she thought of something painful, something connected with the one evening we had spent together in the professor's company so many months before.

After lunch was over I was sent for by the prince to the salon where he usually sat. Professor Doruthor was there when I entered, and I was struck by the bright, feverish light in Prince Ivan's eyes, and the inquiring glance he cast on me as I entered. He was changed, as the professor had said.

No longer languid, silent, and impassable, but irritable, restless, and excited in no small degree. After a short conversation, the box of books I had brought with me from England was produced, and we selected one from amongst its contents, and I began to read aloud.

The prince listened, or strove to listen, but it was not with him as of yore. His mind was wandering far away, and mine, I am fain to confess, refused to fix itself on what I was reading; my mouth uttered the words, but they conveyed no meaning to my brain. Lorinda Fürstein and her letter were ever before my mind's eye, to the exclusion of other ideas.

At length the prince rose abruptly, and seizing the book, tossed it almost violently to the ground, and cried:

"What is it, Miss Dangerfield? What is it, Professor Doruthor? You have something to tell me. Speak. I beg, I entreat, I command you speak, and put me out of my pain."

I was thunderstruck, and instinctively looked at the professor for directions.

"You are excited, prince," said he. "Calm yourself. Yes, Miss Dangerfield has news for you."

How, in Heaven's name, did he know that? I felt terribly agitated and moved, and the prince sank back, white and trembling, on the sofa.

"Speak, Miss Dangerfield," he said, imploringly. "Tell me all, in God's name. I can bear it."

The professor's eyes were on me, his will mastered mine, and without further reflection or hesitation I took from my pocket, with an unsteady hand, the letter Lorinda Fürstein had left behind her, and handed it silently to the prince.

THE perspiration stood in great beads on Prince Ivan's forehead as he tore open the envelope of thin foreign paper, then, turning pale as death, he uttered a heartrending cry of distress, and the letter fell from his hands at my feet.

"My love! my love!" he cried. "Dead! Ah! can it be so? Tell me, Miss Dangerfield, is she dead?"

And he caught my hand in his, and wrung it with the strength that a mortal agony imparts.

"She who wrote that letter and called herself Lorinda Fürstein is dead indeed, Prince Ivan," I answered, with a calmness that surprised me.

There was a deep silence, and then the prince, in a strange, hoarse voice, muttered:

"Dead! and I loved her so! Ah! cruel fate that separated us and blighted our lives," and then turning to me he asked, more calmly, "And when did she die?"

"A year and four days ago," I answered, and the words seemed as if put into my mouth, hardly to be spoken of my own will. "She wrote that letter an hour before her death."

"And was she ill—very ill—when she wrote it?" he asked.

"Yes, very ill; dying," I answered.

"And was she with friends—kindly treated?" he asked, eagerly.

"Yes, she was with friends—with my own relations. She was well cared for," I replied.

"Thank God for that," he muttered, and fell to reading the letter again, whilst the big tears rolled down his face, and the professor signed to me to leave the room.

I did so, and he followed me.

"You have not told him all," he said, looking at me fixedly. "There is more yet. I see it."

"Yes," I replied, quietly, "there is more. She took poison."

"Good God! Never tell him THAT. I forbid you. It would be his death," he cried. "You must obey me."

I looked at him, almost surprised by the violence of his language. It had appeared to me from the first that to tell the prince the whole black truth would indeed be a difficult task. Now I felt that it would be a downright impossibility.

"Tell me all—all," resumed Doruthor, seating himself beside me, and, like a little child repeating its task, I told him all that had happened.

"And do you know the history of this Lorinda Fürstein?" he asked, when I had finished.

"Her history?" I replied, "I know nothing further about her than what I have told you now—but you?"

"I am as ignorant as you are," he replied.

I looked at him in amazement, but I saw at once that he was speaking the truth.

"Shall we ever know, I wonder?" said I, after a pause.

He shook his head.

"The prince is a very reserved man, but before his death, and he will die ere long, I feel it, though it may not be now, he may tell you, Miss Dangerfield—you are the person to whom he seems the most inclined to open his heart, for whom and with whom he feels the greatest sympathy; he loves his mother, but your soul and his are in unison."

"And how do you explain all that has passed—my vision, my letter being moved from the table? Why did she appear to me?" I asked.

"The essence, the power we call 'soul,'" replied the professor, "is a subtle and little comprehended force, that force acting on yours which sympathised, which was so fully in rapport, with the essence, soul (if you so please to call it), of him whom in the flesh she had so loved, compelled your soul to comprehend all that it longed to communicate, but, from some physical incapability of reception, could not communicate to him. You saw, or fancied you saw the scene of her death enacted before your eyes. This scene was not really enacted, you saw it, as you express it, with your mind's eyes, or, as I should say, the power you call her soul presented

it so vividly to your soul that for awhile you verily believed you had seen it with your own mortal eyes. Do you comprehend me?"

"I see clearly what you mean," I replied. "It may be so, but at present the whole thing appears to me utterly inexplicable."

"Well," he returned, "the days are coming when these things will be understood and the laws that govern them ascertained, but it will not be in our day."

And he fell into a profound fit of musing, and after a while we returned to the prince's apartment, but it was vacant, and for a week Prince Ivan hid himself from his fellow-creatures' gaze.

When he reappeared he was grave, calm, and reserved as I had first known him, and no allusion to Lorinda Fürstein or her letter ever passed his lips, yet I firmly believed that, as the professor had said, he would tell me all one day.

And after a long, long time, and when the prince lay dying in his own palace in St. Petersburg with his eyes fixed on the portrait of her he had loved so deeply, he did tell me the history of Lorinda Fürstein Nicholaski, his first and only love.

"The letter you brought me from England," he began, "was written by the woman I loved, the only woman who ever had power to stir the depths of my heart, for, as you have no doubt noticed, Miss Dangerfield, I am by nature reserved and not easily moved either for good or evil, and, like most natures of that sort, for me to love once was to love for ever. Lorinda Nicholaski occupied the same position in my mother's household as you now hold, Miss Dangerfield, but she was—yes, why should I mind confessing it?—a serf, the serf of our distant cousin, Alexander Petrovitch. Ah! you are not a Russian, Miss Dangerfield, or you would understand all that word implies. Yes, my beautiful, refined, intellectual Lorinda was a serf, a slave—the personal property of that coarse, sensual barbarian, Alexander Petrovitch."

"My mother took a fancy to her when she was quite a girl, on seeing her once or twice at the country house of Ida Petrovitch, and made interest with Ida, who loved money more than her soul, to have her well trained and educated, and engaged, after three years' teaching, to take her for her dame-de-compagnie and pay Ida Petrovitch so much a year for her services. Yes, you see we let out our serfs by the month or year, as you in England let out your horses," and he laughed bitterly.

"Well, to make a long story short, ere many months were over I loved Lorinda, and was not long in discovering that my feelings were returned; yet I think my love frightened her. She considered herself below me and seemed to feel from the first that our marriage was an impossibility. I thought otherwise. I fancied that Ida Petrovitch would give her to me for a consideration, and that I and my mother were in such favour at Court that there would be little difficulty in getting the emperor's consent to our engagement. But nothing turned out as I had hoped, and I met with disappointment and repulses in quarters where I had least expected them."

Here the prince paused and sighed deeply, then continued:

"My mother—you know she belongs to one of the best Russian families, Miss Dangerfield—soon discovered our secret, and her surprise, horror, and I may add disgust, I shall never forget, when she first learnt the truth. They staggered me. I had little expected such passionate grief, such determined opposition from her, and it was only by declaring I should at once leave the palace that I prevented her from sending Lorinda back to the Countess Ida, and what her fate then would have been Heaven only knows."

"As it was Lorinda was shut up alone in her apartment—the one you now occupy—and it was not till my mother had tried every art and argument to turn me from my purpose that she gave in, and like a wise, good woman, seeing she could not induce me to abandon my intention of marrying Lorinda, united her efforts with mine

to smooth away the difficulties that lay before us.

"Meanwhile the poor girl's life was, I fear, a sad one. We loved each other dearly, how dearly I cannot express, but she knew my mother's heart was half broken at the idea of my marrying her. She felt perhaps that even as my wife it would never be forgotten that she had been a serf, and daily she grew sadder and graver, and the haunting expression, such as you see there"—and he pointed to the portrait—"came for the first time into her eyes."

"At length my mother and I broached the subject of my marriage with Lorinda to the Countess Ida. She received it with shrill cries of indignation. I was bent on disgracing my name—outraging the family honour. She would not hear of such a thing. Why should I marry a serf? Ah, how my blood boiled with indignation as she spoke the word! Such folly was not to be endured."

However, I believe a little judicious persuasion would have got over her scruples, and the sight of a good round sum in honest gold gone far to assuage her indignant wrath, had not Alexander Petrovitch entered and demanded to know the cause of our dispute.

"He was a coarse, ill-conditioned fellow, and ridiculed as well as scouted the idea of a marriage between Lorinda and me, as his sister Ida had done, and when I waxed warm he vowed in anger that such a marriage should never take place, and demanded that Lorinda should be sent back to her proper owner. We prayed, entreated, but to no purpose, and as a last resource I resolved to appeal to the emperor."

"Contrary to our hopes and expectations, the emperor refused his mediation, and, still more, refused to give his sanction to such a marriage. He had always hoped to see me marry the Princess Marie Vladimir, my cousin, and advised me to do so at once, and forget a girl so far beneath me, so unworthy of me as the serf, Lorinda Nicholaski. Ah! to compare Marie Vladimir, that painted French doll, with my pure, noble Lorinda!"

"Our prayers and entreaties were of no avail, and I felt in my innermost soul that Alexander Petrovitch had been beforehand with me, and won over the emperor to his side by misrepresentation. Afterwards I found out I was right, and bitterly has he paid for his treachery, the villain."

And the whole face of the dying man changed, and for a moment it seemed distorted by the deadliest passion. Then he resumed:

"Alexander Petrovitch was a hale, strong ruffian then—behold him now, Miss Dangerfield, a paralysed, nerveless wretch! My doing, my work, my hand (though maybe he knows it not) worked his ruin, roused his oppressed serfs to rebel against him and make the attack on his life which so nearly succeeded, and left him the wreck he is now."

And a dark smile of satisfaction passed over Prince Ivan's face.

"Lorinda's grief and tears," he went on, "when we brought the news to her were fearful to witness. Beyond the sorrow of our separation was the dread of returning to her owner, the fear of Alexander Petrovitch, and next evening as she bade me good night she clung to my neck and sobbed as I think I have never seen mortal sob before, as if all were indeed lost for ever. I tried to comfort her as best I could, but in vain, and indeed my own agony of mind was too great to admit of my finding much comfort to impart to her, and I left her in an hour or so half exhausted with her grief, and from that hour I have never seen her again, from that night till you gave me her letter her fate has been a mystery to me."

"I have felt indeed that she was dead ever since the night of the séance with the professor, that on earth we should meet no more. But, oh, how I have longed for a last word, a last token of love from her, and to know the manner of her death. That word of love, that information you brought me, Miss Dangerfield. I know now that my darling died amongst friends, and not, as I have too often pictured to myself, of starvation in the streets, or of sickness in some

miserable hospital, and that she loved me to the end—that the righteous dread of her cruel owners urged her to fly, as well as the certainty that in this world we could never be united. Well, I shall see her soon," and a sweet smile spread over his handsome face. "She well knows that as she loved me I loved her, and in Heaven we shall never be divided."

Prince Ivan died a few days after telling me this sad history with his head resting on his mother's shoulder and his eyes fixed on the portrait of her he had so deeply loved and longed so ardently to rejoin.

The poor princess was inconsolable, and for months and months nothing seemed to rouse her from the state of deep, impenetrable melancholy into which the loss of her son had plunged her. I was with her all the time, and still hold my old post of *dame-de-compagnie* in her household, but we never inhabit the palace now, the princess cannot endure it. We live chiefly abroad, in Italy or France, and the halls and corridors of the stately mansion of the Ivanovitchs are empty and desolate, and at the death of the princess the whole of her vast estates will pass to a distant branch of the family whom the princess and Prince Ivan rarely deigned to notice, but who will at her death then become one of the richest families in Russia.

Professor Dorothor I never met again, and I trust I am no longer "a sensitive," for since the apparition of Lorinda Fürstein Nicholaski I have been troubled no further by visitors from the unseen world.

To Gertrude Henderson I related the sequel of my adventure in her house, but whether she believes that the spirit of the dead girl in truth appeared to me, or that by some strange coincidence I dreamed a dream which I mistook for a vision and which had an inexplicable likeness to the tragedy that actually took place there, I know not. She always avoids giving me a direct answer to the question.

NOBLE AT LAST;

OR,

THE HEADSMAN OF ROUEN.

(AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE.)

CHAPTER XX.

A MYSTERIOUS VICTIM.

RAOUL'S announcement was as unexpected as it was agreeable.

"Open the gate and admit the courier the moment he arrives," said Gaultier, exchanging a significant glance with his wife, who at once arose to join him as he turned to re-enter the house.

"I predict that your resignation is accepted," whispered Gabrielle, as they were once more seated in the tapestried chamber. "Shall I remain or go?"

"Remain, if you wish, my love," said Gaultier, returning her smile, but with less confidence than hers displayed; and a moment later the courier was admitted.

"So, Laurent, you come again?" said Gaston, coldly.

"Yes, monsieur; thanks to your generosity, I am still in the service of Monseigneur le Dauphin," said the courier, testifying by the profoundest obedience to the efficacy of his lesson in politeness that had distinguished his previous visit. "My instructions are to place these papers in your hands, monsieur, and wait your answer."

With another bow he presented a sealed packet, which was stamped with the dauphin's own signet. Gabrielle watched her husband eagerly as he broke the packet. It contained two papers—one a large, official order, the other a note in Prince Louis's own handwriting. She saw his face pale slightly as he read the

latter first, and then whiten more perceptibly as he opened the official dispatch and hastily scanned its contents; but his momentary loss of self-control was not made apparent to the courier.

His voice was perfectly steady when he said: "The pleasure of Monseigneur le Dauphin is the law of his humble servant, the Executioner of Rouen. Everything shall be in readiness."

Then, as Laurent still remained standing respectfully, he added:

"I see the name of the condemned noble is withheld from me at present, by the royal order. Have you instructions to say anything more to me?"

"Only, monsieur, that Monseigneur le Dauphin will himself be present at the execution, attend by his suite."

Nothing but an elevation of the eyebrows expressed Gaultier's surprise at this extraordinary announcement, and he dismissed the courier by a wave of the hand.

But a deep sigh escaped him when he once more found himself alone with his wife, and he made no further effort to disguise his disappointment and chagrin.

"Ah! my prediction was wrong, then?" sighed Gabrielle.

"Yes. But predictions should not be ventured on where princes are concerned," was his bitter reply, as he pushed the papers across the table toward her.

The dauphin's note claimed her first attention, and it was as follows:

"WERE it not that I felt myself indebted to you by a most signal personal service of the past, I should ere this have visited your persistent stubbornness with my high displeasure; but, you see, I am not forgetful. Again your resignation has not been presented or accepted. Therefore you are still in the king's service, and bound to obey his order."

"The condemned criminal is noble, and your arm is not apt to fail. Thus, for the second time, do I condescend to place the object of your ambition within your grasp."

"Once before a woman turned you from your purpose; some former lady-love, or the prisoner, perchance, may seek once more to melt you by weak tears. But beware! If you throw away this chance as foolishly as you did the last, never more be protégé of mine. Indeed, I shall become your enemy in such a case; for I am the enemy of all fools who cannot avail themselves of fortune's favours, and of all cowards who, while they aspire, yet dare not clutch the prize when it hangs trembling within reach."

"LOUIS DE VALOIS, DAUPHIN OF FRANCE."

The official dispatch was an official order to be in readiness upon the public scaffold of Rouen at eleven o'clock on the morning of April 25, to perform his office upon a knight and noble of France, whose name was, by special order of the king, withheld.

Gabrielle let the papers fall from her hands, and remained for some moments in silence. To the credit of her womanliness be it said that she had no secret rejoicings over this last opportunity that was afforded her husband to gain distinction and nobility, and at the same time a total relinquishment of his hideous vocation.

Deep, shrinking, regretful sorrow at having to mount the scaffold and lift the axe once more, if but that once, and under any circumstances, was her sole emotion at that hapless moment.

"To-morrow too!" she sighed, at last. "Is there no way—no excuse—by which you can avoid this dreadful duty, Gaston?"

"None!" he answered, pointing sorrowfully at the fatal papers.

He sat for some time in silence, his face pale with contending emotions. At length he mastered himself and said, in low, earnest tones:

"By the love I bear you, Gabrielle—by my hope of heaven—I solemnly swear that I would have avoided this had it been in my power! But it is simply impossible that I should refuse to discharge this last duty of my office; for such refusal would but prove our ruin, and in no way benefit the unhappy victim, whosoever he may be. Nevertheless, I know you will believe me impli-

citly when I say that, so far as I can know my own heart, no thought of joy or gratified ambition mingles with the dread, the sorrow, the remorse I feel at being called again to perform this duty. Ah, Gabrielle, my wife, love has indeed altered my whole nature!"

"And think you, Gaston, that I do not know it, and rejoice in it?" she cried, throwing herself into his arms and bursting into tears. "Bless, bless the strange but happy chance that brought me to your arms, my love!"

He kissed her tenderly, and they for some moments maintained a sorrowful silence, at the end of which Gabrielle spoke again.

"What must be must be, love," said she. "How strange, though, that the name of the noble criminal should be withheld, and by the royal order."

"Not altogether unusual, though, in matters of this kind."

"No?"

"It is a custom altogether the subject of royal caprice, or the result of state purposes."

"Has it ever occurred in your experience before?"

"But once, that I can recall to mind," said Gaultier, knitting his brows thoughtfully. "Yes, only once before. I remember now, it was in the case of my second noble victim, a certain Marquis de Gouffalon, who richly merited his doom for crimes unnumbered."

"And you have no idea as to who to-morrow's hapless victim may prove to be?"

"None whatever, my dear wife. Only, in view of the war news we received from that fellow, Tristan Coupe-Jarret, it is likely to prove some luckless refugee newly captured on the battle field. Yet stay! might it now prove a woman?"

"A woman, Gaston?" exclaimed Gabrielle, looking up in surprise.

For reply he again referred to the letter of Louis de Valois, and read once more aloud the following passage: "Once before a woman turned you from your purpose; some former lady-love, or the prisoner, perchance, may seek once more to melt you by weak tears."

Gabrielle shook her head.

"No, Gaston, that is meant merely as a taunt; it cannot refer to the forthcoming victim's identity."

"I see that you are right."

"Besides," she continued, "how could it now be in your power to save another condemned woman's life by marriage?"

He kissed her, smiling at the absurdity of his own mistake. Then he seemed to be struck by the sad persistency with which she had pursued the subject.

"Have you any idea as to who it may prove, Gabrielle?" he asked.

She looked at him steadily without speaking for a moment, and then said, with a look of forced surprise:

"But how should I, dear, when you have none?"

"You might recall among your titled relatives someone whose possible misfortunes could have led to such a fate."

"No," said she, slowly, and with another sad, fixed look, which he was too preoccupied to remark at the moment, "among all such that I can recall there is not one. At any rate may Heaven have pity on the poor condemned whom man has so forsaken!"

She might have continued the melancholy speculations upon this subject, but at this moment the page, Raoul, craved and received admittance to his master's presence, with an air of reserve, and she slowly withdrew.

But as she did so there was a strange brightness and half-concealed energy in her manner which might have caused her husband some solicitude had he been less absorbed in his own thoughts. For, if the truth must be told, Gabrielle had, indeed, strongly suspected the identity of the unnamed victim of the morrow, and, in view of such suspicion, and her intuitive apprehensions of what might be the outcome of its confirmation, she was already resolved to take certain extraordinary measures, without her husband's knowledge, to meet a peril which she felt impending.

"You have further intelligence to impart, Raoul?" said Gaultier, looking up as the page entered.

"Only that the news the courier must have brought you, my good master, is already the talk of the town," replied the lad.

"It makes a stir, then?"

"Ay, that indeed! The governor of the prison is already making preparations for the execution, which the promised presence of the dauphin and his train will render all the more impressive. The townspeople are giddy over it."

"I marvel not; 'tis long since they've had such a charming treat," said Gaultier, with gloomy sarcasm. "Of course, the chief cause of their sensation is the mystery that has been thrown around the intended victim."

"Ay, sir; that, and the brilliant cortège that will attend, though perhaps the mystery's the greatest feature of excitement, since it will continue to the last moment."

"What say you?" cried Gaultier. "Will not the prisoner reach the prison some hours in advance of the execution?"

"Ay, sir; he is expected at the prison before sunset of to-day, but masked and closely guarded. Only the governor and his jailers are to have access to him in his cell, not even excepting yourself, the Public Executioner; nor is the prisoner's mask to be removed save at the block itself."

"This is strange, passing strange, I do confess," said Gaultier, thoughtfully. "What high state reason can there be for such unprecedented secrecy?"

"May it please you, master," Raoul ventured to say, "the gossips of the streets are rife with speculations, rumours and conjectures."

"Naturally enough. And what say they, my lad?"

"That the mystery surrounding to-morrow's victim may have been maliciously instanced by Prince Louis de Valois chiefly upon your own account, good master," replied the page, somewhat timidly.

"How?"

"I only speak it as the prevailing impression, sir."

"But why and how on my account, by all that's reasonable?"

The page lowered his voice and spoke with still greater diffidence.

"They suggest, sir," he whispered, hurriedly, "that the condemned may be one who has experienced sudden disfavour—no other than the Count de Montfort—whose identity is suddenly to be revealed to you at the moment of decapitation, as a disgrace and shame for you, in that he is the father of your wife."

"Disgrace! shame!" repeated Gaston, springing to his feet with a sort of joy. "Why, would to heaven the rumour runs aright! To have that murderous, unnatural old villain's bended neck beneath my axe's final stroke would joy my heart and arm so much—"

He paused abruptly, and began to pace the floor with his long strides. He was restrained by a sudden recollection that Gabrielle, his tender wife, would scarcely be a partaker of his exultation in such a realisation of the popular rumour, much as she would know her father worthy of such a fate.

He was only a moment in regaining his self-control.

"Dame Rumour wags her giddy tongue to little purpose this time, be assured, my lad," said he, smiling. "I'll wager moody Tristan Coupe-Jarret did set afloat that morbid tale. Laurent, the courier, could not have had the wit."

"Nay, master; I know not whence it sprang, but surely not at evil Tristan's wish," said Raoul. "He stands apart, and smiles, and shakes his head, as is his wont, and slyly hints that he may soon aspire to wear your fallen mantle."

"Poor Tristan!" said Gaultier; "its fatal hue would well befit his evil nature, I've no doubt, but without influence his ambition is not likely to be realised."

He left his chair again.

"My hat and mantle, Raoul. I'll to the prison for a little space, and see what I may learn of news," said he; and when Raoul had brought

the articles to him he added: "See to your mistress while I am gone, my page, and look to it that she hears naught of such ill-judged reports."

He turned once more to his page, ere quitting the house.

"You will say to Madame Gaultier not to await my presence at the evening meal," said he. "I may find other orders at the prison, which will detain me until past the hour."

Raoul bent his head respectfully, and his master set out for the prison.

(To be Continued.)

HELENA'S PASTORAL.

THE scene is a dingy dressing-room, in a dingy old house, situated in a dull but eminently aristocratic London quarter. A slow, dull fire smoulders in the grate, and the old lady who sits before it in an easy chair is wrapped in a dingy old shawl over a still dingier wrapper. It is June, but not a ray of the glorious summer sunshine penetrates through the chocolate-coloured moreen curtains that drape the windows.

The place is "stuffy" and dismal in the extreme. The young girl who stands by the mantelpiece ought to brighten the whole room with her fresh, radiant loveliness, but instead of that she has fallen under the spell of its gloom, and stands there pale, downcast, with tears in her great dark eyes. She looks like a culprit, and she is one, and the old lady (who looks so sweet and meek and gracious—who has such gentle blue eyes, and such a soft voice, in public) is engaged in trying, convicting and sentencing her to speedy punishment.

"Wretched, unprincipled girl!" she says, sharply. "I wonder you dare to look me in the face after such duplicity. I allowed you to refuse three good offers—Sir John Dewey, young Ascott and Mr. Grayson, who is worth, at least, two millions, to say nothing of all the detriments that you had the good sense to decline without asking my advice—all because you led me to believe that you intended to accept Lord Rexford. And he believed it too, and everyone else with eyes in their heads. You have deceived us shamefully. You have behaved with the most heartless coquetry."

"Oh, grandmamma!" remonstrates Helena, a faint, indignant colour tinging her white cheeks, "I didn't mean to deceive anyone. I knew you wanted me to marry him. I tried to do it to please you."

"Stop!" says Lady Pemberton, coldly and haughtily. "Do you dare to say that you were going to marry Lord Rexford to please me? That you did not care for the wealth, name and rank he could give you? That you felt no pride in making a conquest where dozens of beauties and heiresses had failed, but were simply going to marry Rexford because I wanted you to do it? Sweet, dutiful child! What a pity you had not courage to complete the sacrifice!"

Helena's head droops and she answers, humbly and falteringly:

"No, no, grandmamma! I didn't mean—I—I have done very wrong. I was tempted. I thought I could marry him. It seemed an easy thing to do. Girls marry that way every day, and—and—Lord Rexford was kind and good-natured. But when—just at the last—it seemed base and horrible—I—I could not do it!"

"Very well," Lady Pemberton says, in tones of ice. "Very pretty and sentimental. I hope you are prepared to bear all the talk and scandal it will make. Some people think with me that you have jilted Rexford shamefully. But others will never believe he proposed to you. They will say you 'threw yourself at his head,' and failed in your attempt to entrap him. Indeed, I should not be astonished if they said all sorts of things about you. You have gone about everywhere with Rexford. Your imprudence



[RED AS A ROSE.]

has been shocking. You must go away till the affair blows over. Oh, dear! That I should live to be so disgraced—

"Grandmamma!" breaks in the indignant young voice, as Helena raises her head, and her eyes flash through her tears, "I have not done anything disgraceful, except—yes, it was disgraceful to think of marrying a man I knew I did not love. But I did nothing except what you sanctioned. I only went where you permitted me, and—"

"There, there, child!" Lady Pemberton says cecily. "Do reflect that I thought you were going to marry the man. I am old and feeble. I could not drag abroad with you everywhere, and I trusted you with Rexford. If you would marry him no one would say a word."

"But I can't marry him, grandmamma. I don't lo—"

"Don't be a fool, Helena," Lady Pemberton snaps out. Then, sinking back in her chair, she languidly waves the girl away, and murmurs, "Why do I waste my breath? She is a fool, and will never be cured of it. Go away! Go to your room, Helena."

Helena slips away and spends the morning in floods of tears, alternating with tempests of anger and indignation. She knows she has been a tool in the hands of her manœuvring grand-mother, yet she is conscious that, carried away by the vanity and ambition that worldly old lady has aroused in her heart, she has lent

herself only too willingly to Lady Pemberton's plans.

It is only at the last moment, when success is certain, that the revulsion has come; true womanly pride has arisen in her heart and she despises herself for the pretty arts she has practised so gaily, and registers a solemn vow that she will never again engage in the pursuit called by the irreverent "husband-hunting."

Poor little Helena! She has a hard time in the next three or four days. Lord Rexford comes back ("unheard-of good luck," grandmamma says), and gives her another chance for a coronet.

But Helena stands firm. Lady Pemberton's poor "little fool" is "brazed in a mortar among wheat with a pestle," but "her foolishness does not depart from her."

At the end of a week she is ordered to pack up her clothes and is sent off in deep disgrace to stay with a country cousin, a grave, hard-working rector, with a quiet wife and a house full of children.

Lady Pemberton intends it as a punishment. It would be a frightful one to her. But Helena does not mind. As her grandmother's maid, who has escorted her to the rectory, drives back to the station in the fly that has brought them, Helena watches the carriage out of sight and draws a long breath. The last link of the chain is broken. She is free—at least for a while.

She is in a strange place, among strangers, but she does not mope. She knows they all

think her a "naughty girl" here, for grandmamma has written them a very pious letter in which she bewails her darling's "waywardness," and hopes the dear rector will not be shocked by her levity.

But Helena is a winsome little thing. She sets to work to make them love her, and in three days she has won them all. The rector smiles indulgently at her wildest freaks, good Mrs. Maberly pets and spoils her, and the children adore her.

Helena is happier than she ever was in all her life—her short, young life that has been spent either in the dull routine of a boarding-school or under her grandmother's piercing eyes. She has had one season of "the world" of fashion, of gay crowds, of pretty dresses, and the flattery of admirers, but she is happier now than she was during that brief, feverish period of gratified vanity, of ambitious plans, of manœuvring, and of self-reproaches.

She makes heroic resolutions about her future life. She sees how calmly and sweetly life flows on at a quiet rectory, and she vows that wealth and rank shall never tempt her again.

"I'll never marry anyone that grandmamma wants me to," she vows. "I hate money; I despise titles. If I marry at all it shall be a country clergyman, and I'll spend my days doing good. Or if I never marry and grandmamma dies, and there is no one to take care of me, I'll ask Mrs. Maberly to let me come here and teach these little children."

With this virtuous resolution Helena follows Mrs. Maberly about the house, her flower-garden and her dairy, and finally goes with her to visit her poor people and the parish school. All this has the charm of novelty to Helena. It is delightful to find herself actually "doing good," carrying soup and wine to sick people who "bless her for her kindness," reading to the blind old woman who says "her voice is as sweet as a lark's," teaching and petting little children, who smile up in her face and cling lovingly to her hand, and big ones who stand around her and stare at her with respectful adoration.

Last of all, it is not at all unpleasant to find the young curate, Mr. Lindsey, watching her with his deep-set, dark eyes, and to know that this grave young man, who has been wont to advocate strenuously the "celibacy of the clergy," has fallen deeply and hopelessly in love with her.

Thus time goes on. It is now growing late in the summer. Peaches are ripening on the sunny walls of the old rectory garden, and Helena and the children are gathering them.

"There's the very reddest and ripest yet, Bobbie!" Helena cries, pointing high up above her head, and there is a desperate scramble on the part of the three boys to reach the prize.

But none of them gets it, and Helena gives it up with a sigh, when suddenly an arm is stretched up, the peach is gathered, and Helena turns to face Mr. Lindsey, who holds out the peach to her with his quiet smile.

"Oh, thanks!" she says, laughing. "How nice it is to get what one wants."

"How much nicer not to want what one cannot get," the curate says, almost gravely, as his eyes rest quietly on her lovely face.

Helena shakes her head laughingly.

"I am not a philosopher like you," she says. "I want, oh, ever so many things I cannot get. Now you! You have a well-regulated mind, and I am sure you never want anything but just what you ought to have, and that you know you will get."

Mr. Lindsey smiles in spite of himself as he looks down upon her. She is so pretty, standing there, with her straw hat half falling from her head, her bronze-brown hair loosened and glinting in the sunlight, her eyes sparkling, her cheeks flushed and dimpling with smiles. She wears a dress of pale blue muslin with "elbow sleeves" that show her round, white arms and blue-veined wrists.

Mr. Lindsey cannot help seeing how graceful and lovely she is, to the very tips of the perfect

little hands that are holding up a wide, flat basket filled with glowing peaches. He tries to speak lightly, but Helena's quick ear catches the sigh with which he says:

"I am afraid I am not such a philosopher as you believe me. I often want what, perhaps, I may never have."

Then she turns away, saying, carelessly:

"Oh, if I were a man I would have what I wanted. Now, come, Mr. Lindesay, we are going to have tea out of doors here in the garden, and you shall help me set our table, and you may drink tea with us."

It is a pretty picture that five-o'clock tea under the spreading walnut tree in the garden. Helena and Alice Maberly (a fifteen-year-old little maiden, with a face like one of Fra Angelico's angels) make the tea and serve it in rare old china.

The rector, Mrs. Maberly and the curate sit sedately upon chairs and talk parish matters while they drink tea, and the boys roll upon the grass and eat peaches. But after tea Mr. Lindesay manages to stray away with Helena, and they find themselves presently resting in the rose arbour at the very end of the long garden.

"See how the poor roses are drooping with the heat," Helena says, gently lifting a full-blown crimson rose with her slender finger tips, and then as softly touching it with her lips.

Mr. Lindesay does not speak, and she turns to find his eyes fixed earnestly upon her. Then he does speak, and in a moment Helena knows that the destiny she has coveted may be hers. If she pleases she may be a country clergyman's wife, and spend her life doing good.

She has not been at all blind to the devotion of this grave, earnest young curate. She has seen it for some time. Even Mrs. Maberly has seen it, and has thought it would be "such a nice thing" for Helena, and has managed to tell her all about the young man—how noble and good he is (but Helena sees that for herself), of what a good family he comes, how he has quite a nice income besides his curacy, and will one day be rector of a pleasant parish in Devon.

Helena has listened dreamily as if it did not concern her a wit, but all these were pleasant things to hear of the man she was actually beginning to—like—very much.

She does like him—she thoroughly esteems and respects him, and with him she will live that ideal life she dreams of, that pretty pastoral of country life, of green fields and bird songs, of peace, innocence and goodness. Why should she hesitate? Certainly not because she thinks "grandmamma will be furiously angry."

That thought comes to her, but strange to say rather gives her pleasure. Yet she does hesitate; her heart beats quickly, and for a little while she cannot speak. At last she says:

"I—I am not sure, Mr. Lindesay. I do like you very much, but I am not sure I—love you."

What lover was ever discouraged by an answer like that? Mr. Lindesay is not, and in half an hour Helena has given a half consent, a sort of promise, which sends him off unutterably happy. But nothing is to be said about this half engagement, though Mr. Lindesay looks grave when she refuses to let him see or write to her grandmother, but yields to her wishes.

For several weeks now life flows on tranquilly as ever at the rectory to all appearances. Helena is very diligent with the schools and the poor people, and Mr. Lindesay praises and encourages her.

He has taken almost the tone of an accepted lover now. He comes to Helena for advice, and tells her of parish jars and troubles whose existence she had never suspected, and which rather dismay her. He begins too, very gently and kindly, to point out to Helena those of her faults which will most seriously impede her usefulness as a clergyman's wife.

This is rather alarming, and not altogether elysian, but Helena bears it sweetly and tries hard to be properly sedate, and to "think before she speaks."

It is a "blue and golden day," late in September. As Mr. Lindesay walks up to the rectory door Helena comes out to meet him with a brighter face than usual.

"We have had a grand visitor," she announces, smilingly. "Lady Western has come home to the Hall. There are to be crowds of people there, and I am to go to-morrow to spend a fortnight with her."

"Lady Western!" exclaims Mr. Lindesay, in displeased surprise.

"Yes. Surely you know her. She says she adores you, and you are to come to dinner to-morrow, and to be there as often as you can. I wonder if—if she suspected anything," Helena says, rather anxiously.

"Possibly she did," Mr. Lindesay replies, carelessly. "Well, I shall go of course. I do not like or approve of Lady Western, but as you are to go I shall be there as often as I can. You will be safer if I am there."

"Safer! From what?" Helena asks, with wide-open eyes. Then as Mr. Lindesay does not answer she laughs, and goes lightly on. "Oh, you needn't be afraid of Lady Western. She is a good-natured soul. We were very good friends in London, and her house is always charming."

So Helena goes to Lady Western's for another glimpse of "the world" she had left. How long it seems since she quitted it! What has happened in that world while she has been playing her little pastoral at the rectory? What have her old lovers been doing, especially Lord Rexford? Her grandmother in her few and short epistles has only mentioned him once.

"Lord Rexford is in Switzerland with the Blounts. They say he is to marry his cousin, Constance Blount, the girl with the snub nose and a hundred thousand pounds."

So Helena does not dream of meeting him at Lady Western's. But as she enters the drawing-room before dinner and stands talking to Mr. Lindesay and several others she sees across the room a tall, sunburned young man, with close-cut, light brown hair, a light moustache, and bright blue eyes. It is Lord Rexford. But before she has time to feel any awkwardness or embarrassment he has crossed the room, shaken hands with her cordially and is chatting with her in the friendliest way.

Then he goes back to the lady he had left, a pretty, bright, fresh-looking girl, who certainly has a nose retroussé, and, Helena hears, is his cousin, Constance Blount. Helena supposes of course that he is engaged to her, and is rather surprised when she finds that Lord Rexford is to take her, Helena, down to dinner. She is surprised too to find how easily and agreeably conversation flows between Lord Rexford and herself during that meal.

They talk a great deal of merry nonsense, and Helena's soft laugh rings out so often that Mr. Lindesay across the table looks at her gravely now and then. They talk a great deal of serious good sense besides, and Helena thinks that Lord Rexford has "improved wonderfully."

After dinner he finds his way again to her side, and it is not till people are beginning to take their bedroom candles and say good night that she sees Lord Rexford conversing with his cousin in a really confidential and lover-like manner. She wonders what they are saying, and almost wishes she knew. After all it is only this:

"Well, Harry, have you found out anything?" asks Miss Blount, eagerly.

Lord Rexford laughs—not a very gay laugh—and quotes, from the "Bab Ballads":

"I've changed my views," the maiden said,
"I'll only marry curates, thank you."

"Do you really think she is engaged to him, Harry?"

"I don't know, cousin. You see he is in love with her,"—the lady nods assent—"and he gave her some very black looks across the table. Poor little girl! There's always somebody to tyrannise over her!"

"And if the post of tyrant is ever vacant you know someone who could fill it admirably," Connie laughs, as she puts her hand in his and says "Good night."

And, singularly enough, the sight of this cousinly converse gives Helena a feeling almost of jealousy. It is such a little while since Lord Rexford's little murmured confidences were all for her ear.

It is very odd, but Helena sighs as she thinks of it.

So the days pass. But surely if Miss Blount is engaged to Lord Rexford she is the least exacting of fiancées. During the next fortnight it is certainly Helena that he devotes himself to, yet Connie is always good-humoured and smiling, and is especially sweet and friendly to Miss Pemberton.

It is Helena that Lord Rexford walks and rides with, and takes moonlit strolls through the gardens with. He certainly does not make love to her, but is as cordial, as kind, and as "nice" as it is possible to be.

When Mr. Lindesay pays his frequent visits she notices too how courteously Lord Rexford gives way to the young clergyman, yielding to him the place by her side, which Mr. Lindesay does not fail to claim.

It must be confessed that Helena does not enjoy Mr. Lindesay's visits after the first day or two. She is not doing anything wrong, yet his grave eyes rest disapprovingly upon her. He does not like to watch those pretty, half-coquettish ways of her, which other people admire so much.

He thinks she is too thoughtless, too gay. He tells her so very gently but very firmly. Helena hears these reproaches meekly, and tries to "reform," but it is hard work, and she begins to weary of it a little.

One evening after dinner she has walked with Lord Rexford on the banks of the little river at the foot of the lawn, and at last they have stepped into a boat, and rowed down the river in the sunset glow.

They are late getting back, and Mr. Lindesay is waiting for them at the landing. He hears laughter and snatches of song, and the boat comes slowly round the bend of the river.

Then he sees Helena skilfully pulling the sculls, and Lord Rexford idly leaning back and watching her with laughing, admiring eyes. He meets them very gravely, and Lord Rexford presently makes some polite excuse for leaving them, and walks quickly off towards the house.

"Helena," begins Mr. Lindesay, mildly, "I am sorry to say anything that sounds like a rebuke—"

"Don't say it then," laughs Helena, her pretty eyes raised appealingly, and her hand laid coaxingly on his arm.

"That is childish, Helena," he says, quickly. "If I see you doing anything that is wrong or unbecoming I must tell you."

A mutinous look that is altogether new to him comes into her lovely face. She answers, almost haughtily:

"I have done nothing wrong, or unbecoming—nothing that any other lady in that house could not have done unproved. It is you who are too punctilious, too exacting."

"I cannot think that I am too exacting when I ask you to behave with that dignity and reserve that befits my wife."

Mr. Lindesay says this quietly. But Helena answers, hotly:

"If I am to change my whole nature, and crush out all the life and joy that God has put into my heart, I will never be your wife."

Mr. Lindesay stops and looks at her with a pale, stern face. He is utterly silent for a moment, and then says, in a tone that he forces to be quiet:

"Do you mean to say that you wish to break our engagement?"

Helena bites her lips to keep back a sob, and says not a word. Mr. Lindesay goes on, in a softer tone:

"You must do what will make you happiest, Helena." Then, after another silence, he says, still more gently, "I will not say any more to you now. I came to say that Mrs. Maberly told me your visit here was to be extended, and I shall not be able to see you for three days. I am going away for that time. Helena, when I

come back I hope you will be yourself again. Shall I take you to the house now?"

"No; leave me here," Helena replies; and she throws herself down on a rustic seat under the trees and covers her face with her hands. She knows that Mr. Lindesay lingers near her for a moment and then is gone.

A little while afterwards Lord Rexford comes hastily down the path and pauses, abruptly, as he sees her.

"Miss Pemberton, I came to look for you," he says. "I met Mr. Lindesay and thought you were alone. Isn't it rather damp to sit here?"

"It will not hurt me," Helena answers, and Lord Rexford instantly detects the "tears in her voice," and thinks, indignantly, "That prig has been scolding her and making her cry." He hesitates for an instant, and then exclaims, indignantly, "Miss Pemberton, it's no business of mine, I daresay, but I can't see you in distress without asking if I can help you!"

Her tears flow again at the sound of a sympathetic voice, and presently—how does it happen?—Rexford knows all about Helena's "pastoral," and how it came about that she is half-engaged to the young curate, without her grandmother's knowledge.

He guesses much that she does not tell him, but he does not satisfy himself as to whether she really after all loves that grave young man or not, and when she asks, sadly, "What can I do? It seems to me that whatever I do will be wrong," he is silent for a moment and then answers, gravely:

"You can be as honest and true to him as you were to me, just reversing the order of things, however; for if you love him, you must tell him so, and fight a battle-royal with Lady Pemberton for your own way; then, when you've got it, be the most dutiful, the sweetest parson's wife in England. And if you don't love him, for Heaven's sake—for your own sake, and his—don't do him the cruel wrong of marrying him. Be true, Helena, and he cannot help reverencing you—as I did, even when you drove me wild by—"

He checks himself abruptly, and Helena is glad the darkness hides the burning blush his words have called up.

Then she rises and they go towards the house in silence. As they part in the hall Helena suddenly gives him her hand, and half-whispers:

"Thank you, Lord Rexford, you have been a good friend to me."

And he proves himself a good friend in the three restless, miserable days that follow, when he manages so cleverly to shield her from arrogance and observation.

The three days pass; the fourth comes, and Rexford, who has spent the morning riding, finds, on his return, that "Mr. Lindesay have been and have seen Miss Pemberton in the library, and have gone, sir." At dinner Helena is very gay—almost feverishly so. It is not till the next day that Lord Rexford finds an opportunity of speaking to her alone. She is reading in the library, when he looks in—walks in—closes the door after him, and comes towards her, smiling.

"Am I to congratulate you?" he asks, holding out his hand.

Helena colours and shakes her head.

"Only on having found the courage to tell the truth," she says, and then her eyes fill with tears suddenly. "He is so good," she murmurs. "You don't know what a good man he is, Lord Rexford. I feel—I know I have behaved very badly, and I deserve all that can happen—all that will happen to me for trifling with him so."

"What dreadful thing is going to happen?" Rexford asks, smiling.

"Oh, you have not heard! Lady Western has been talking to me. She says everybody knows, and is talking about it; and people say I am so—heartless—" (here Helena's lip quivers a little, and Lord Rexford bites his, angrily) "and someone has written all about it to grandma, and she is coming—coming here, tomorrow, and will take me away to some dread-

ful place, and—oh, dear, I don't know what to do!"

Helena leans her head on her hand, and looks sadly out of the window.

"Shall I tell you a way out of it all—how to silence everybody who calls you heartless, to pacify Lady Pemberton, and to escape that 'dreadful place'?" Rexford asks, coming closer to Helena's side.

"Yes; if you can," she answers, listlessly.

He bends over her, takes her hand, clasps it in both his and says, solemnly, yet with laughing eyes:

"And now, mine own dear little girl, there is no way but this."

Helena blushes deeply, tries to draw her hand away, and says, with reproachful eyes:

"Oh, Lord Rexford, how can you talk nonsense when I am so miserable?"

"It is not nonsense," he declares, suddenly grave. "I was never in deeper earnest in all my life. See here, Helena, won't you just try to love me? I have been vain enough to fancy sometimes in these three weeks that you—you did not quite hate me, and if you will marry me—"

"Stop, stop, Lord Rexford!" Helena cries, breathlessly. "How can I marry you? I thought you were engaged to Miss Blount?"

"Connie? Why, that dear little soul is going to marry my brother George! Helena, answer me, will you marry me?"

"What! after fighting a battle-royal with grandmamma to avoid marrying you?" Helena asks, with a laugh that ends in tears however, and in an unconditional surrender—for she knows now that at last she does really and heartily love Lord Rexford, though she "hates riches" and "despises titles."

Lady Pemberton arrives the next day, but Lord Rexford meets her at the station, and her subsequent behaviour to Helena is a model of suavity and sweetness. She absolutely forbears to triumph over her with regard to her engagement to Lord Rexford, and does not make either then or thereafter the slightest allusion to the affair with Mr. Lindesay.

It is three years since Lord Rexford first kissed Helena Pemberton in Lady Western's library.

The Rexfords are very happy. Not even Lady Pemberton's occasional visits to their country seat can mar their happiness, for she treats the young people with stately, old-world courtesy, and has never once said, "I told you so!" to Helena.

At Rexford Helena finds as much "good" to do amongst her husband's tenantry as she would have had if she had realised her dream of being a country clergyman's wife. And Mr. Lindesay is engaged to Alice Maberly, a sweet, gentle little soul, who will probably make him a far better wife than he would have found in pretty, faulty, wilful Helena Pemberton.

FACETIÆ.

A "RUM" Go.—Taking away the Jack Tar's "go" of rum. Fun.

CHANGED (AF)FRONT.

LANDLORD: "How now, Pat, how comes it that you don't touch your hat to your landlord?"

PAT: "Touch me hat to you, is it?—after Mister Parnell tellin' us that 'twas ye were to touch to us! Sure it's meself that wonders at yer want o' manners." Fun.

"DEAR LITTLE SOUL."

SHARP CHILD: "If you come to be our governess I do so hope you'll marry my growd-up brother soon."

YOUNG GOVERNESS: "Good gracious, child! why?"

S. C.: "'Cos then there'd be a jolly big wedding cake, and shouldn't I just have a blow out when it was put afore me!" Fun.

It is reported that one of the members for Wicklow, in the heat of an oration in the House of Commons, a few evenings ago, uttered the following "bull": "As long as Ireland is silent under her wrongs England is deaf to her cries."

"You old vulture, you!" she exclaimed, when he hinted that five bonnets a year were enough for any ordinary woman. Next day, when he relented and told her to order a sixth, it would have made an angel smile to hear her sweetly call him "Birdie."

It was a four-year-old who asked, "Papa, have you done anything in town to-day that you think I ought to whip you for if I were as big as you are?"

THE SERVANTS.

MATERFAMILIAS (finding the new nurse deep in a sensation novel): "Surely, nurse, you can't nurse baby and read at the same time."

NURSE: "On, lor, yes, m. She doesn't disturb my reading a bit, m!" Punch.

AMANTUM IRE.

ANGRY WIFE OF HIS BOSOM: "I wish I was dead and cremated, and my ashes put in an urn on your dressing-room table, and then perhaps you'd be a-s-sorry."

FACETIOUS MONSTER (a member, we regret to say, of the Stock Exchange): "My dear, that wouldn't end the family jars—it would only begin them." Punch.

IT IS VERY ODD.

THAT the more debts are contracted the more they expand.

THAT, although you may marry a widow, you may at the same time marry a—miss.

THAT, although many better halves do not put out their waning, yet they do put out their husbands.

THAT, although it is said "nothing can beat a good wife," yet frequently a bad husband does.

THAT, although some lovers' quarrels begin with a smack, many end with one. Judy.

OUR DRAWING-ROOMS IN 1881.

GOLDEN YOUTH: "Don't like music? Oh, y'as a' do, though. At awfully jolly concert last night."

YOUNG LADY: "And what did you hear?"

G. Y.: "On, 'Fetch 'em with a wot,' and 'Got 'em on,' and 'Getting a big boy now,' and 'Hang up your hat behind the door,' and 'Come to your Martha,' and 'The young cock cackles.' You should have been there, you'd have roared." Judy.

[And it is quite likely she would.] Judy.

RADICALLY WRONG.

RADICAL: "I tell you, sir, I am, and always shall be, a staunch Radical, sir."

TORY: "Then I tell you, sir, that you are, and always will be, radically wrong, sir."

[They join in a "split."] Judy.

A SOUND INVESTMENT.—Paying a shilling to hear the "British Army Quadrilles."

Moonshine.

IN SCHOOL.

EARNST TEACHER: "And this little Israelitish boy, with a simple aling and stone, triumphed over this huge monster. Now, who killed the giant?"

LITTLE BOY: "Jack." Moonshine.

LOANS ON PERSONAL SECURITY—A SOLUTION.

BORROWER: "But I understand from your circular that you lend upon personal security."

LENDER: "Certainly" (opening safe); "will you kindly step in here, and" (condescendingly) "you then can have any amount you like?" Moonshine.

"THE AUTOCEAT OF THE BREAKFAST TABLE."—King Coffee. Moonshine.

GENTLEMEN-AT-ARMS.—Duellists. Moonshine.

THE ONLY PHILISTINE WHO CAN APPRECIATE THE ÆSTHETIC "BEAUTY OF DECAY."—The ardent cheese-eater. Funny Folks.

LIGHT, MORE LIGHT.

YET another electric light has been introduced. It is called the "Fox," after its inventor, and ought to be, if not actually superior to all that have preceded it, at any rate before the Brush."

Funny Folks.

WHO "STEELS" MY SENSE.

ACCORDING to "Myra's Journal," "Steel is to be largely worn as trimming for ladies' dresses this season."

Rival beauties will in future, then, find in each other foe-women worthy of their "steel."

The "currency" of the fashions too will be a "metallic" one. As to the trimming, it will be bought by the "steel-yard," we presume.

Social morality will not be improved, we fear; but ladies will "steel" the new design with the greatest alacrity.

Ladies have already worn the cuirass, and in their new metallic trimming they will be in a kind of "Bast-steel."

The only wonder to us is that steel is not used for "lining." Railway directors' wives especially would find this an appropriate mode.

Funny Folks.

AN IM-"MIDGET" SUCCESS.—The American Midgets.

"BEAUTEUS-SCREECHERS."

A CERTAIN portion of the press always speaks of strong-minded femininity as the "Sneaking Sisterhood." May we not suggest, as better sounding, to give them the generic title of "Lady Yelps"? How'll that do?

Funny Folks.

WUNN LUNG would be a good name for a presumptive Chinaman.

A KISS—The elixir of tulips.

STATISTICS.

THE RUSSIAN COMMERCIAL NAVY.—In 1872 the commercial navy was put down at 185 steamers and 2,329 sailing vessels. In 1877 it had increased to 248 steamers and 3,296 sailing ships, but, as the tonnage was not specified, it is impossible to form any opinion of the value of such a fleet as a carrying power. But the last return gives the tonnage. On January 1 the commercial fleet consisted of 296 steamers, of about 160,000 tons, and 4,121 sailing ships, of about 550,000 tons; 1,196 were occupied in deep sea voyaging and 3,221 in the coasting trade; 3,695 of the vessels were built in Russia, and 722 abroad.

URING the year 1880 there were published in the United States 2,076 books—an average of over 34 a week. Of this number 292 were books of fiction, 270 juvenile books, 239 theological and religious, 151 works of biography, memoirs, &c.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

CHICKEN BROTH.—Take a chicken weighing two pounds after it is dressed, break all the bones, cut in small pieces, and put in a porcelain-lined stewpan with a quart of cold water and two teaspoonfuls of salt; let it come very slowly to a boil; put aside on the stove closely covered, and let it simmer, say three hours, or till all the meat drops from the bones; then strain and skim. There should be a pint of soup when it is done, so if it boils down too much a little hot water should be added while it is cooking. If the patient is strong enough to bear it, a little rice, tapioca, or barley can be added an hour before serving; two teaspoonfuls of rice are sufficient.

SALMON SALAD.—If canned salmon be used, drain it dry, and pick into flakes with a silver fork; mince some celery and boiled beet-root together in equal quantities, and mix with salad dressing an hour before required; cut a crisp

lettuce finely and add it the last thing. Garnish with slices of hard-boiled eggs.

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT.

THEY were sitting together—Maude, Mabel and Carrie,

Discussing a theme in which women delight,

When Maude, who was clever,

Declared that she never

Believed in the folly of love at first sight.

For the flame that was kindled so lightly would quickly

Burn out, and leave hardly a trace of its glow;

"'Tis surely a fable,"

Said pretty Miss Mabel,

Who blushed as if she had good reason to know.

"Far better," said Maude, as if reading a lecture,

"The calm and dispassionate love that endures,

Than this sudden passion

So largely in fashion,

Which but a brief moment of pleasure secures.

So, girls, that we may not repent of our bargain,

And sorrow o'er that which should give us delight,

Of smiles let's be chary

And ever so wary

Of being betrayed into love at first sight."

Now grandmamma seemed to be busily knitting,

And paying no heed to what anyone said;

And yet there were twinkles,

Of mirth 'mid the wrinkles,

And now and then slowly she nodded her head.

"If love comes at all he will come in a hurry!"

Said grandmamma, startling the girls with affright;

"Maud, Mabel, and Carrie,

If ever you marry

You'll find that your hearts were demanded at sight."

The girls, far more modest and prudent, I warrant,

Than many possessing the half of their charms,

Made noble resistance,

And kept at a distance

The bold little chap who is always in arms,

Until—how it happened they never could tell you,

And many another the mystery shares—

Love swiftly advancing

And rapidly glancing,

The hearts of those maidens were caught unawares.

The years sped along, and the maidens were matrons,

With homes by Love's beautiful presence made bright;

"'Tis surely no fable,"

Said sweet mistress Mabel,

"That Harry and I fell in love at first sight."

And Carrie and Maude made as honest confession—

For they were as happy with Robert and Fred—

And others as clever

And prudent must ever

Acknowledge the truth of what grandmamma said.

J. P.

MISCELLANEOUS.

BUILDING EXHIBITION AT THE AGRICULTURAL HALL, ISLINGTON.—A very interesting and in-

structive Building Exhibition is now being held at the Agricultural Hall, Islington. Everyone interested in Architecture, Engineering, Furniture, Decoration, etc., should make a point of seeing this varied and extensive collection before its close, as at present arranged, on the 16th instant.

AMONG the presents offered by Mr. Leopold Rothschild to his bride was found the most curious piece of mechanism ever produced, consisting of the silver gilt figure of a negro bearing a tray of tropical fruit. The figure on being wound up was made to discourse in most eloquent music, while the fruit on the tray, opening one by one, disclosed exquisitely modelled little figures, who danced with the most consummate grace until the music ceased.

THE swallows have arrived on the Cornwall coast, betokening an early spring.

A WOMAN has just died at Hexham, near Newcastle, at the advanced age of 105 years.

AN English cricketing team, captained by Alfred Shaw, of Nottingham and M.C.C. renown, is to visit Australia at the close of this season.

It is probable that Her Majesty will pay a short visit to Germany in the autumn, not to Baden, but to Coburg.

RICHARD A. PROCTOR says that, with a good telescope, one can see 100,000,000 suns, each the centre of a universe.

SEVENTEEN wild swans have this winter made themselves a home on a mill lock in North Ronaldshay, the most northerly of the Shetlands.

WILLIAM FERGUSON, aged 80 years, of Lancaster county, Pa., recently married Mrs. Margaret B. Wilson, 70 years old, of Wilmington, Del. It is said that they were engaged 50 years ago, but a quarrel arose which separated them.

A WOMAN named Elizabeth Hutchins has just been discovered to be the heir to an estate worth nearly £20,000, which has been in Chancery for many years. Hutchins has spent a great part of her life either in the workhouse, gaol, or lunatic asylum. Lately she has been living in a wretched house in Roath, Cardiff.

THE centenary of the birth of George Stephenson will be celebrated by a grand festival on the 9th June next, and the proceeds will be devoted to the construction and support of a new wing to the Railway Servants' Orphanage at Derby, to be named after the inventor of the locomotive.

THE Government have signified their intention of turning Chester Castle into a military prison. In future all civil prisoners for the county will be incarcerated in Knutsford House of Correction, being only detained in Chester Castle while awaiting trial at Chester quarter sessions or assizes.

THERE are about 300,000 or 400,000 jinrickishas, or men-waggons, in Japan. The jinrickisha is a kind of Japanese hansom, drawn by a man instead of a horse, who will trot at the rate of six miles an hour, cover from thirty to forty miles a day, and count himself well paid if he gets half a crown for his day's work.

THE Crown Prince of Germany has just purchased Rubens's magnificent picture of Neptune and Amphitrite, which has hitherto been one of the principal ornaments of the celebrated picture gallery of Count Schönborn, in Vienna. The price paid for the work is 200,000 marks, or £10,000 sterling.

It must be confessed that the building of a stable for twenty horses on the top of a private mansion, access to which is obtained by means of a lift, is calculated to awaken a feeling of astonishment even in these days of marvels. Yet this is the case of a house just erected in Belgrave Square by Mr. Sassoon. Ground is, of course, very valuable in Belgrave Square, and by relegating the horse to the top of the house two birds are killed with one stone, for space is saved and the smell of the stables avoided. The horses do not seem by any means to object to the mode of ascent; possibly they are unconscious of it on account of the closed shutters of the lift. This is by no means the first occasion of the experiment of giving horses a mount to the sky-parlour for their stables.

CONTENTS.

| Page | Page |
|--|--|
| A WISOME WIFE ... 553 | MISCELLANEOUS ... 575 |
| SCIENCE ... 556 | CORRESPONDENCE ... 576 |
| A BURNED SIE; OR, HAUNTED LIVES ... 557 | |
| OUR COLUMNS FOR THE CURIOUS ... 560 | No. |
| AN INJURED WOMAN ... 561 | NORLE AT LAST; OR, THE HEADSMAN OF ROUSE. (AN HIS- TORICAL ROMANCE) commenced in ... 923 |
| THE STRANGE HISTORY OF LORENDA NICHOL- SON (COMPLETE) ... 565 | A BURNED SIE; OR, HAUNTED LIVES, continued in ... 925 |
| NORLE AT LAST; OR, THE HEADSMAN OF ROUSE. (AN HIS- TORICAL ROMANCE) ... 570 | AN INJURED WOMAN continued in ... 929 |
| HELENA'S PASTORAL ... 571 | A WISOME WIFE com- menced in ... 933 |
| FACTS ... 574 | |
| STATISTICS ... 575 | |
| HOUSEHOLD TREAS- URES ... 575 | |

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

OUR CORRESPONDENTS should in all cases furnish us with their names and addresses. Letters signed simply with initials or a nom de plume may not always receive immediate attention, as our space is limited. No charge is made under any circumstances for advertisements appearing on this page.

GEORGE.—Smoking to persons who have a tendency to pulmonary disease is highly dangerous; but where the lungs are healthy, if enjoyed in moderation, it does no harm to the general health. To persons of a lymphatic temperament it is said to be even useful.

W. L.—Memory is retention in the mind; and retention depends in a great degree on attention. There is a way of fixing things by going over them frequently; and there is a way of connecting them with some other things which are always present with us, according to laws of association.

P. H.—Emir is a title of the caliphs among the Turks and Persians, awarded to the descendants of Mahomet by his daughter Fatima about 650. To such only was originally given the privilege of wearing the green turban.

LAURA.—Courier pigeons are of very ancient use. The ancients, being destitute of the post, were accustomed when they took a long journey to take tame pigeons with them. When they wished to communicate with their friends they let one of these birds loose with letters fastened to its neck; the bird once released would never cease its flight till it arrived at its nest and young ones.

M. L. C.—"Between you and I" ought to be "between you and me." "Between" is a preposition and governs the objective "you," which "and" connects with the next pronoun, so it must be in the objective also. But "I" is nominative and "me" is objective.

A. S. B.—The Chinese claim the invention of the mariner's compass. They ascribe it to their Emperor Hong-Ti, who, they say, was the grandson of Noah. Some of their historians refer the invention of it to a later date, 1115 B. C. The fleur-de-lis was made the ornament of the northern radius of the compass in honour of Charles of Anjou, whose device it was, and who was the reigning King of Sicily at the time of this great discovery.

E. S.—The word interlude is derived from the Latin inter, between, and ludus, a play; and means a short play or dance accompanied by music introduced between the acts of a piece, or between the play and the after-piece; it is not of modern invention. The ancients were acquainted with certain short pieces, loosely connected, which served to make an easy transition from one play to another.

ANITA F.—The lines are above the average of first productions, though scarcely good enough to print.

C. J. S.—Poem very good—we have, however, no room for it, our supply is so much in excess of requirements.

HARDSON HARRY.—Francis (Teutonic) means indomitable; Eugene (French, from Greek), well born; Percy, said to have come from "Pierce-eye" (Teutonic), hero of the people; Bertrand (Teutonic), bright, generous; Otho, Brandon, Colman, of uncertain origin; Barnaby (Barnabas, Hebrew), consolation; Cornelius (Latin), a horn (sign of power or plenty); Phalim, also doubtful; Cyril (Greek), a lord.

EDWARD J.—William (Teutonic), a defender; Joseph (Hebrew), increasing; Arthur (Celtic), a bear; Terence (Sabine or Latin), gentle; Raymond (Teutonic), pure peace; Edgar (Teutonic), success in war; Martin (Latin), warlike; Sidney, doubtful meaning; Frederick (Teutonic), peaceful ruler; Benedict (Latin), blessed; Oscar, uncertain origin; Ernest (Teutonic), earnest-minded; Rudolph (Teutonic), counsel and help; Richard (Teutonic), valiant, powerful; Rupert (Teutonic), bright, counsellor; Lucien (French), bright; Denis (Greek), descendant of Bacchus; Hugh (Teutonic), mighty; Owen (Celtic), lamb (a form of the Hebrew John); Felix (Latin), happy; Basil (Greek), a king; Ralph (Teutonic), unadorned; Gerald (Teutonic), warlike chief; Victor (Latin), conqueror; Vincent (Latin), invincible; Jules (Julius, Latin), soft-haired; Emile (French, from Greek), winning manners; Edwin (Teutonic), happy and beloved; Clement (Latin), merciful; Percival, doubtful meaning.

MINNIE and DOT, two sisters, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. Minnie is nineteen, tall, brown hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition. Dot is seventeen, golden hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition.

ALLIE and JEANNE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Respondents must be between twenty-two and twenty-five, tall, dark.

HAPPY JIM and LAUGHING JACK, two seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young ladies between nineteen and twenty-one with a view to matrimony. Happy Jim is twenty-four, tall, dark, fond of home and children. Laughing Jack is twenty-two, tall, dark, good-looking, fond of home and children.

LONELY CHARLES, twenty-six, medium height, fair, would like to correspond with a young lady about twenty with a view to matrimony.

GERTRUDE, LEAH and ALEXANDRIA, three friends, would like to correspond with three young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Gertrude is twenty-two, medium height, dark hair and eyes, fond of home. Leah is twenty, medium height, fair, fond of home and music. Alexandria is eighteen, medium height, fair, fond of home.

COUNTY BELLE and TOWN BEAUTY, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. County Belle is fair, fond of dancing. Town Beauty is nineteen, medium height, fair.

LAURA, NELLIE and AGNES, three friends, would like to correspond with three young gentlemen.

LENA and LIZA, two sisters, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. Lena is tall, brown hair and eyes. Liza is tall, brown hair and eyes.

NELLIE and LIZZIE, two friends, would like to correspond with two mechanics about twenty-one. Nellie is twenty-one, medium height, dark, good-looking. Lizzie is nineteen, tall, fair, good-looking.

JOHN H. S., twenty-five, tall, dark, good-looking, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony.

LOVE'S LOGIC.

Should a worthy penitent
Who would make confession,
As he low for pardon kneels
Glory in transgression?

Tell me, sweetheart, ere you give
Perfect absolution,
How an erring soul can make
Ample restitution?

Like cures like, the sages say,
Truth to me, most winning,
Why should not the rule apply
To sinners, and to sinning?

One kiss—alas! 'twas only one—
From your lips I rided,
You frown, that I with Cupid's bow
Audaciously have trifled.

Then let me take one more embrace,
To cancel my transgression,
And then—no more—clots out, my love,
The second indiscretion.

LOTTIE and EMMA, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Lottie is twenty-four, brown hair, blue eyes. Emma is twenty, dark hair and eyes, fond of home and children.

ALFRED, twenty-seven, medium height, good-looking, fond of home, would like to correspond with a young lady about twenty-two.

JIB STAY and BOB STAY, two seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young ladies about eighteen or nineteen, fair, good-looking. Jib Stay is nineteen, medium height, dark, black hair, hazel eyes. Bob Stay is nineteen, medium height, Auburn hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition.

T. C., twenty-five, would like to correspond with a good-looking young lady with a view to matrimony.

HERBERT SPOKESHAVE and LIVELY JACK, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Herbert Spokeshave is thirty, tall, fair, fond of home and children. Lively Jack is twenty-seven, medium height, dark, fond of home and children. Respondents must be twenty-four and twenty-six.

SUBSTANTIAL, twenty-five, medium height, dark, would like to correspond with a young lady about eighteen.

A. B and C, three friends, would like to correspond with three young ladies with a view to matrimony. A is twenty-two, medium height, dark, good-looking. B is twenty-two, medium height, good-looking. C is twenty-five, tall, fair, good-looking.

JAMES B. and DAVID, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. James B. is twenty-one, tall, fair, good-looking, fond of home. David is twenty, medium height, fair.

MAGDELINIE, twenty-one, tall, fair, of a loving disposition, fond of home and music, would like to correspond with a tall, dark young gentleman with a view to matrimony.

SALLIE and ALICE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. Sallie is twenty-two, dark, good-looking. Alice is eighteen, fair.

BELLA and ISABELLA, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. Bella is seventeen, tall, fond of home and music. Isabella is eighteen, medium height, of a loving disposition.

DARK MAGDALINE, tall, dark, of a loving disposition, fond of home, would like to correspond with a young gentleman with a view to matrimony.

BONNIE JEAN, twenty, dark, would like to correspond with a young gentleman with a view to matrimony.

POLLY, MAGGIE and ADDIE, three friends, would like to correspond with three young gentlemen. Polly is twenty, medium height, good-looking, fond of children. Maggie is nineteen, fair, blue eyes. Addie is dark, of a loving disposition.

SPONGE, RAMMER and WORM, three seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with three young ladies between eighteen and twenty-two. Sponge is nineteen, dark hair, hazel eyes. Rammer is twenty-two, brown hair, blue eyes. Worm is twenty, medium height, brown hair, hazel eyes, good-looking.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

ROUGH is responded to by—Madge, seventeen.

SMOOTH by—Freda, eighteen, medium height, dark.

D. McC. by—Kathie, seventeen, medium height.

MABEL W. by—C. E., tall, good-looking.

LIVELY GERTY by—Sailor Jack.

A. W. by—Blossom, nineteen, tall, fair.

DABRELL by—Ethel.

BRADAWL by—Kate, tall, dark.

GIMBLET by—Agnes.

CENTRE PUNCH by—Bertie, medium height, dark.

TRAPS by—Eda, twenty, tall, dark.

LYLL by—Glenogower, twenty, medium height, dark.

ISABELLA T. by—Anglo Saxon, nineteen, tall, dark.

ISABELLA N. by—American, twenty, medium height.

HAPPY BESSIE by—George, twenty-seven.

TOX by—Jessie, tall, dark.

DICK by—Pollie, medium height.

BRADAWL by—Alice, twenty-three, fair.

GIMBLET by—Kate, twenty-two, fair.

CENTRE PUNCH by—Annie, twenty-one, dark.

BELLA by—F. G., tall, fair.

HUDSON by—Emmy W., nineteen, tall, fair.

BELLA by—G. W., thirty.

NELLIE by—Ira B., twenty-five, medium height.

ARTHUR E. by—Nellie, twenty, tall.

PRIMROSE by—F. A.

DARK-EYED FULLER by—Lively Fan, nineteen.

PRIMROSE by—Hookrope, twenty-one, fair.

VIOLET by—Hookpot, twenty, dark.

LILY by—Tin Dish, twenty-two, medium height.

HAPPY BESSIE by—A. G. G., twenty-five.

CHEDDEN D'OR by—Charles L., twenty-two, tall.

BRADAWL by—Polly F., seventeen, tall, dark.

BRADAWL by—Brad, medium height, fair.

HAPPY BESSIE by—Jack, twenty, medium height.

LILY by—Right Reamman.

MISS DAIST by—Romeo.

ELECTRICAL JACK by—Lizzie, twenty-two, tall, dark.

MINNOTT TEST by—Annie, eighteen, medium height.

DYNAMITE by—Cis, nineteen, medium height.

DABRELL by—B. A. K., twenty, medium height, dark.

BELLA by—W. J. E., forty, medium height, dark.

WILLIAM by—Florrie, twenty-two, fair.

JOHN by—Pollie, medium height, fair.

CHARLIE by—Mary Ann.

WILLIE by—Lucy.

JOHNSON by—Brunette.

ALL the back Numbers, Parts, and Volumes of the LONDON READER are in print, and may be had at the Office, 334, Strand; or will be sent to any part of the United Kingdom post free for Three Halfpence, Eightpence, and Five Shillings and Eightpence each.

THE LONDON READER, post free, Three Halfpence Weekly; or Quarterly One Shilling and Eightpence.

LIFE AND FASHION, Vols. I. and II., Price Seven Shillings and Sixpence each.

EVERYBODY'S JOURNAL, Parts I. to IV., Price Threepence each.

*. * Now Ready, Vol. XXXV. of the LONDON READER. Price Four Shillings and Sixpence.

Also the TITLE and INDEX to Vol. XXXV., Price One Penny.

NOTICE.—Part 221 (March) Now Ready, Price Sixpence; post free, Eightpence.

N.B.—Correspondents must address their Letters to the Editor of the LONDON READER, 334, Strand, W.C.

†† We cannot undertake to return Rejected Manuscripts. As they are sent to us voluntarily authors should retain copies.

London: Published for the Proprietors at 334, Strand, by A. SMITH & Co.